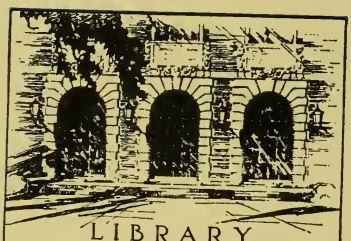

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THRICE:

A Novel.

BY

W. A. CHANDLER,

AUTHOR OF "NOT TO BE BROKEN," "THE RUM RHYMES," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THRICE.

A STATELY City fraught with evils dire,
Whose dwellers wallow in the foulest mire,
Where stunted, gin-fed babes grow thin and pale,
Where merchants gamble, overtrade, and fail.
Where folks are ruined by financing drones,
Who filch from bubble schemes, or foreign loans
To so-called States ! Poor thriftless, shirtless louts,
Mere drawing posts for Jew and Gentile touts.
Where senseless loons who stir King Mob to riot,
Will places get of trust to keep them quiet.
Where love has nearly lost the glow of passion,
And woman faith forsakes to follow fashion.
Where letters' censors, letterless Yahoos—
Unknown a standard—all alike abuse,
Or sordid Mammon masques in Pallas' guise,
The first last question, "Does he advertise ?"
Not he ! Adieu to faith and charity,
The lowest prints can find vulgarity
In works the best their mighty pens will raise
To overwhelm with epithets of praise.
The base desire to finger sudden wealth
Leads men their masters' cash to stake by stealth,
And then to shirk the penalties and pains,
They fly abroad, or scatter out their brains.

'Twas thus they fell in Greece, and Rome of old,
By flaccid luxury and greed for gold,
Their nerveless arms forgot to use their swords,
And then they fell a prey to northern hordes ;
Let England stir and purer views impart,
Lest all her sons grow destitute of heart,
For those that yield to sensual degradations,
Are oft enslaved by less luxurious nations.

THRICE.

CHAPTER I.

A RICH MAN.

His talents seldom shone with much effulgence,
He'd rubbed their polish off by self-indulgence.

Mr. Brinkhurst was a stock-jobber. People not well versed in the ways of trade might think this a rather low-class business. Of pig jobbers they may perhaps have heard, and they may have jumped to the conclusion that a jobber of any kind must be a rough, stout, red-faced man, redolent of stables or pig-

styes, and necessarily unfitted to mix in high middle-class society.

The stock-jobber, however, generally differs materially from the pig-jobber in appearance, social *status*, and mode of earning the staff of life; they resemble each other in this latter particular only, inasmuch as each of them buys a commodity for the express purpose of selling it again at a profit, and in this respect they are not unlike the majority of traders.

It may be taken for granted that the stock-jobber as a rule makes money with more facility than his flesh-dealing brother, who often has to travel many miles in an open cart, or on foot, to draughty markets, where he probably has to stand for several hours exposed to the fierce heat of the summer sun, or

to the biting cold of the cruel wind, which travels in a too direct line from the North Pole.

The stock-jobber, on the other hand, is always comfortably housed during his business hours; in the hot months he may find it unpleasant to stand perspiring in a room which, though comparatively spacious, is by no means large enough to allow all its members anything approaching the number of cubic feet of air prescribed by the laws of health; the din of a chattering, seething, striving crowd may at first be trying to his nerves, and he may find it difficult to bear with calmness the indignity of having his new hat knocked off and used as a football; but money comes easily, a new hat can be purchased for a trifle, and he soon levels up, or levels

down, to the general tone of "the house." In winter the breath of many pairs of lungs, combined with hot-water pipes and "nips" at the bar, serve to keep him free from the discomforts which befall the less fortunate pig-jobber.

Mr. Brinkhurst lived in a handsome house at Fritham—that is to say, it used to be called handsome, before villa architecture had developed into its present beauty.

The house, though not actually ugly, was flat-fronted and uninteresting, and could not be called pretty, even by friends of the family; it was large and convenient, with a coach-house at the side, where Mr. Brinkhurst kept a barouche, and a pony-carriage. A wide carriage-drive led up to the front-door, and a spacious garden at the back took

a sweep round on each side, and shortened the gardens of some of the neighbouring houses.

Mr. Brinkhurst cared little for flowers, but his wife was passionately fond of them; her standard roses on the lawn, were the talk of the neighbourhood, consequently the rich stock-jobber did not grudge the money spent on them and on their attendant gardener.

Punctually at ten o'clock every morning Mr. Brinkhurst started for the City by the omnibus, so that he arrived at his office a little before eleven; then he went to "the house," made purchases and sales till nearly four o'clock, and reached home again a little after five, in ample time for six-o'clock dinner.

At least twice a week there was a dinner party at the house, and hardly

a day passed without one or two friends being invited to bear its master company at his evening meal. People were tolerably unanimous in saying, "he's very hospitable," and equally agreed in regarding this quality as meritorious; it never occurred to them that some men find themselves such poor company that guests are as much an every-day necessity to them as most other articles which they purchase; so that a rich man hardly deserves more credit for profuse hospitality than he would obtain for buying an expensive carpet.

Mr. Brinkhurst invited acquaintances to dinner, not because of the esteem he felt for them, but because their presence was an excuse and an incentive for excesses in which he would have in-

dulged with less pleasure if only his wife and son had been present.

When he had company he could produce bottle after bottle of the choicest vintages, of which he took quite his share; the consequence being that, although he was never so drunk as to lose his senses, he always went to bed full of wine—you could see the *bon vivant* in his face and figure; and yet this man, who indulged his animal nature to the utmost, looked down on the athlete, with his careful and abstemious habits, as a mere beast of the field.

After dinner, cards followed as a matter of course, but it was not worth Mr. Brinkhurst's while to play except for tolerably high stakes—he looked upon games of chance almost purely as a matter of business, which, on account of

his skill or luck, or both, generally paid him. In point of fact, he was making money nearly all day long. On the way to the City of a morning, in the omnibus, he seldom failed to find some kindred spirits who were willing to bet on any passing event—such as the Derby, the St. Leger, Henley Regatta, or the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. He generally had pretty good information as to which horse, or which boat, was likely to win, and acting on the maxim that "no bet is a good one till it is hedged," he usually managed to make loss an impossibility.

Arrived in the City, he went to "the house," there he made money all day long. Like the bookmakers on horse-races, he could hardly fail to gain if only he chose to be cautious. One day

he would be a "bull," the next day he became a "bear;" but he always made money. Sometimes, with three or four friends of large capital, he would get up a snug "corner" as the Americans term it. Mr. Brinkhurst and his friends managed the stratagem in a much less complete manner than their trans-Atlantic brethren, but they did it more frequently. He seldom lost except when there happened to be a general panic, and even then he somehow managed to fall on his legs,—a very useful accomplishment, either on the Stock Exchange or in the hunting-field. Making money was his *summum bonum*, as much for the enjoyments he could purchase with it as for its own sake. In fact, it might almost have been thought that he anticipated an *ex-mundo* state of existence

sufficiently material to permit of the circulation of ordinary terrestrial coin.

He valued his acquaintances in exact proportion to their incomes—a very sensible method if they happened not to be gifted with any other qualities; but in his estimation no one possessed any other characteristic worthy of notice.

He was totally unable to conceive that people should look upon themselves as otherwise than money-making machines, to be worked at the highest possible pressure.

There were a few artists, professional men, and others in Mr. Brinkhurst's neighbourhood, who, instead of living only to make money, merely made money to live. For these he had a perfect contempt, which they fully reciprocated, looking upon him only as a successful

gambler feeding on the losses of the unsuccessful.

The rich man, riding haughtily in his carriage and pair, doubtless thinks that he excites the envy of the passing tramp, who, on the contrary, is congratulating himself on his general freedom, and his immunity from the necessity of working hard for the sake of keeping up appearances. So the men by whom Mr. Brinkhurst thought he was envied really despised him.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND SON.

Oh ! high and low, whose prayers in church are seldom or habitual,
Just think how slow and dull t'would be without the solemn ritual.

Mrs. Brinkhurst being the daughter of precise and economical parents, had never felt thoroughly at her ease amid all the dinner parties and general luxury which pervaded her husband's establishment. She was the youngest and prettiest of four daughters; the remaining three were still unmarried, and would probably remain so till the end of their

days. They were certainly less handsome than their more fortunate sister; in fact, although always spoken of as "nice girls," it was generally conceded that they were plain. Worse than this, they had no money; had they only possessed twenty thousand pounds a-piece, they would probably have had no need to complain of any scarcity of suitors; doubtless there might even have been found enterprising spirits who, if guaranteed against a prosecution for trigamy, would have willingly married all three. But in an age of such general luxury, when nearly every male lives up to or beyond his income, few can afford to marry penniless wives. Progress in civilisation has not effected an improvement by absolutely forbidding so many women to follow the dictates

of their nature. The female savage and the butterfly who marry as soon as they arrive at the proper age, are probably happier than the genteel European young lady, pining because the exigencies of the artificial state in which she lives prevent her from becoming a wife. It seems as if the possible enjoyments of life are balanced with tolerable equity; the fashionable miss wears costumes and chignons which would make her dark-skinned sister die of envy, until she could understand such splendour to be incompatible with the chance of possessing a home and a husband.

Mrs. Brinkhurst having been bred up in a home of taste and refinement, combined with a certain amount of self-denial, now that she had almost nothing to desire, often felt melancholy and *ennuyé*. A little more

intellectuality and quiet would have been preferable to so much luxury; but as a good wife she was, of course to a great extent, obliged to swim down the stream with her husband. The only gentleman whose visits to the house afforded her much pleasure was the Rev. Richard Sparman—a ritualist among ritualists—who revelled both in late and early symbolism, the confessional, &c. His rich uncle had erected a neat Gothic church in the neighbourhood, appointing him incumbent, and the frequent services, together with the various offices connected with them, served to fill a considerable void in Mrs. Brinkhurst's otherwise purposeless existence. Religious exercises are very often useful in this respect: they occupy a vast amount of feminine spare time. If, however, in a

few decades women become self-supporting, the priesthood will probably find employment scarce. One can hardly fancy the irrepressible High Church curate waiting on a smart young female company-monger at her counting-house in Change Alley, and confessing her in the private office. Should the march of female intellect continue, suggestive ecclesiastical banners will become scarce, and the clergy will have to buy their slippers. The young lady tied to her office all the week would be apt to prefer an after-breakfast lounge with some interesting scientific treatise, or the last new novel, even to attending Sunday morning service. The occupation of the gentlemen in black cloth would become still more anomalous, and they would have to leave off preaching for want of

an audience. Husbands relieved from the silent or noisy pressure of their better halves, would certainly never go to church by themselves, and what is now called religion would die for want of leisure, for without women to instil it into us during childhood, belief in the supernatural would have become defunct long since.

Mr. Brinkhurst had two children; Wilfrid the only son of his mother, not unnaturally took after her. At a very early age he was a dark, grave, square-featured *distingué*-looking boy, broad-shouldered, well-shaped, and free from that raw, soft expression which characterises the majority of the rising generation in all ages. Mrs. Brinkhurst doted on him, and as his father saw hardly anything of him during his

childhood and boyhood, she of course managed to deeply imbue him with her own devotional ideas. On Sunday mornings, while her husband treated the aphids on his beautiful standard roses to unappreciated whiffs from his choice Partazga cigars, she took her little son to the old parish church, hideous with stucco outside and with galleries inside, looking more like a large, ugly mechanics' institute than a sacred fane; but as there was at that time no more decent edifice within several miles, the fond mother never tired of reminding her boy that the early Christians worshipped in cellars and in other equally objectionable places. During his childhood it is far from certain that little Wilfrid would have noticed the extreme ugliness of this gloomy structure, but in her maiden

days Mrs. Brinkhurst had lived in the neighbourhood of Salisbury Cathedral, and within church-going distance of the costly architectural gem at Wilton, so she always felt bound to apologise when she saw a place of worship, which was otherwise than beautiful, belonging to the Establishment.

CHAPTER III.

A HIGH PRIEST.

> While nature bids to wed each bird and beast,
> Who shall affirm it's wicked in a priest?

On the advent of the Rev. Richard Sparman, the parish church lost more than half of its congregation, and whereas there had formerly been only two parties in the district to feel spiteful towards each other over religious observances, there were now three, viz., Churchmen, Ritualists, and Dissenters. The old-fashioned people who had been taught to look upon anything having the

faintest tinge of Romanism, as a work of that well-abused personage the Devil, of course adhered to their old parson, who frequently assured them from the pulpit that none of the abominations of Ritualism should ever offend their sight or smell. Had these staunch parishioners taken the trouble to consider that their beautifully pure and simple Church of England is—as it were—only an expurgated edition of the Church of Rome, perhaps they might have rushed off at a tangent to embrace one of the old Eastern religions which can at least boast of greater antiquity and comparative freedom from admixture.

The younger people—especially the ladies—delighted in Mr. Sparman; he had a charmingly ascetic look, suggestive of the tightly knotted *flaggellum*, long

fasts, vigils, and pilgrimages, with unboiled peas in his shoes. He always wore a long cassock-like coat, a broad-brimmed wideawake felt hat, and looked every inch a priest. He was not much over five and twenty—dark, with well-cut features, and close shaved with the exception of about one inch of short whisker. This style of trimming his face, combined with the unbecoming dress, hard work, and frequent fasting, gave him a gaunt, worn look, causing him to appear older than he really was.

The fact of his being an advocate for the celibacy of the priesthood made him a great favourite with the ladies; he reminded them of the good old times long ago, when priests dare not marry; it was pleasant to meet a handsome

young clergyman, totally unlike the ordinary run of curates, who are supposed to be always looking about for a good establishment, standing up as it were to have the handkerchief thrown at them, and then settling down to a humdrum married life like any one else. Here was a man—a gentleman by virtue of his profession— who said "I have vowed to remain single," but who might nevertheless legally marry whenever he choose, without the slightest scandal; there would be that spice of romance about winning him, so dear to all women, and the number of them who enrolled themselves as "sisters" wearing the semi-nun dress was out of all proportion to the poor inhabitants, who were few and far between in such a place as Fritham. On an average

there were five or six sisters to each deserving object, and at times it was almost as difficult for a sister really desirous of working, to secure one, as it occasionally is for a medical student to obtain part of a subject for dissection; consequently the greater portion of the black-robed ladies had to content themselves with walking about in their peculiar dress, to be stared at by the lay inhabitants, many of whom took them for real nuns, condemned to spinsterhood "poor things!"

Of course, very few married ladies joined the gallant band, their husbands would have very naturally objected to see them habited in such an unbecoming garb; but there were a few who, —being a terror to their spouses—did pretty much as they liked, and these

were always inciting the other dames to rebellion.

Mrs. Brinkhurst would have taken to the uniform with great kindness, but for the sake of peace and quietness at home she abstained, consoling herself with periodical confession in the most approved fashion, not in her own drawing-room, as is sometimes the case. The Rev. Richard Sparman, ascetic as he looked, had far too great a sense of humour to risk performing the sacred office surrounded by all the frippery of a modern best room in a rich man's house, where the slightest incident might make the fair penitent's sighs turn to laughter. By hearing all confessions in the Church he avoided scandal, but the offence given to the old orthodox party by thrusting such an essentially Roman

Catholic rite under their very noses was intense, and the more virulent of them vowed that such a state of things should not be allowed to go on; banners, gorgeous vestments, incense, processions, genufluxions, and the rest, were bad enough, but to usurp authority over the consciences of their wives and daughters was——, here they generally paused for an epithet, but they were nevertheless determined to put a stop to the abuse.

When Wilfred was fourteen years old his sister Helen was seventeen—a woman while he was still a boy. Even at that immature age she was rarely beautiful—fair but not insipidly so, with a wonderfully transparent skin, delicately formed piquant nose and mouth, hair as glossy as virgin silk, only a little darker in colour, worn always in a tight-coiled

plait behind, plain and slightly waived in front; with her exquisite figure rather above the usual height of a woman, she might have sat for Aphrodite draped in modern costume. Although she could hardly fail to be aware of her beauty, she was not proud of it, nor did she ever take advantage of it to indulge in coquetry, regarding her natural gifts rather as something to be used sparingly, and not otherwise than for the good of her fellow-creatures. There were three or four young men in the neighbourhood who, moth-like, would have singed their flimsy wings in the lambent flame of her beauty had she given them the least encouragement, but she had no conception of this style of amusement; love with her would be a much too serious matter to use as a plaything.

Had there been any real demand for her services she would have willingly giving them in visiting the poor, without being guilty of the coxcombry of promenading the district in a peculiar dress—not that she accused her friends who did so, of deliberate foppery, she made allowances for them, knowing that they erred unwittingly, because it happened to be the fashion; just as it is a fashion and even a positive requirment that wigs should be worn by judges and by barristers, in order that they may be endowed with an air of adventitious wisdom; although they have not the very sufficient excuse which soldiers have for wearing uniform. Perhaps when we are a little further advanced towards that improvement to which we are so slowly travel-

ling, uniforms of all kinds will be as unnecessary as soldiers, and nations will play a game of Kriegspiel instead of going to war, the respective numbers of the armies to be determined on the fixed basis of the countries' revenues—a method of adjusting quarrels which would certainly be less childish than the present one.

Knowing that the exigencies of her parish by no means required her to become an amateur sister of mercy, Helen Brinkhurst managed to employ her time in reading, writing prose and poetry, music, painting, and in taking long walks and rides with some special friend.

Perhaps because she did not—like so many other young ladies—enrol herself a member of his sisterhood, Mr. Spar-

man admired her more than any girl he had ever seen; but being vowed to the Church he felt bound to resist female charms. He compared himself to St. Antony and to other saints in the Calendar, but it did not then occur to him that among the early Christians saintship might not have meant nearly so much as it seems to mean at this distance of time, and that people might have been canonised during life for the same reasons as men are now sometimes converted into peers, viz., to effectually remove them from some sphere of which they are tired, or in which they are either obnoxious or incapable; while to the really good or useful man posthumous canonisation was a merely matter-of-course *addendum* to the erection of his statue.

Although Helen did not feel called upon to become a visiting sister, there was no reason why Wilfrid should not assist in the service of the Church. Next to his becoming a priest—which Mrs. Brinkhurst knew her husband would never permit—there was no position she so much coveted for her son as that of a chorister. To actively minister to the praises of God seemed to her a heavenly employment. She had cultivated his voice most carefully ever since he was quite a little fellow, accustoming him especially to sacred music before he was twelve years old. Mother, brother, and sister, with the assistance of any musical friend, were able to sing Mozart's Masses very creditably, so that even unmusical Mr. Brinkhurst felt a mild pleasure in hear-

ing them. He pooh-poohed the idea of "putting Wilfred into calico," as he termed it; but as the boy had not yet arrived at a sufficient age to be capable of analysing the religious aspirations with which his mother had imbued him, he was anxious to enter upon such a *quasi* priestly office, and as the mother was very earnest in the matter it was of course accomplished.

In his full canonicals Wilfred took all the pleasures that a boy usually does in new clothes; he strutted about the aisles before service began in his fine new cassock, and then at the proper time, having donned his surplice, he marched into the elaborately ornamented little chancel with the other boys. He it was who lit the candles on the altar, even when it was quite light enough to

see without them, and who carried round one of the gorgeously-worked offertory bags, while the solemn hymn was pealing forth. At such times Mrs. Brinkhurst felt supremely happy, it seemed to her almost like an inversion of the usual idea, that instead of her son being an angel in heaven, regarding her from his serene attitude, she, a poor earthling, was capable of seeing him.

Under favourable circumstances a child is always more precocious than its parent; and Helen, although she felt a certain pride and pleasure in seeing her brother taking part in the service of the church, was very far removed from that state of religious rapture enjoyed by her mother. The music, the decorations, and the incense, pleased Helen's senses, she felt a sort of mild satisfaction in the

time-honoured associations they suggested, and sometimes an unusually solemn or exquisitely devotional burst of harmony would lift her as it were out of herself, but she became again of the earth earthy in a very short space of time, and her thoughts wandered back to the worldly occupations of yesterday or to-morrow.

Mr. Brinkhurst, who had not been to church for many years, did not even trouble himself to go when Wilfrid was "put into calico;" habits of thought especially engendered by his business led him to estimate things, as he flattered himself, at their true value; and when, in allusion to the Church service in general, he said he had "seen the piece so often," he felt satisfied that he had quite disposed of the question.

In a vague sort of way he believed in the existence of a Deity who would not be in the least likely to interfere with him so long as he did no harm, and paid his differences regularly every settling-day.

His belief in a state of conscious existence after death was still more indefinite. Of course, as a child, he had imbibed the usual notions from his mother about holy people in heaven singing eternal praises to the Most High; but when he pictured himself sitting on a damp cloud all day warbling hymns in a husky bass, he came to the conclusion that the occupation would be even less enjoyable than buying and selling stock. Finally determining, however, that some more congenial employment would be found for gentlemen who enjoyed a

pleasant drive and a good dinner afterwards, he dismissed the subject from his mind as eminently unprofitable, and on that account not to be recurred to.

CHAPTER IV.

PARTIES.

"Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to."
HUDIBRAS.

As Mrs. Brinkhurst had never been able to bear the idea of sending Wilfrid away to boarding-school, he attended classes daily at a good school in the neighbourhood, so that he had ample time to devote to the business and to the services of the Church, of which latter there were a considerable number. Every morning at seven came early celebration, when the very limited congregation con-

sisted almost entirely of professionals—that is to say, of the sisters, who bearing in mind that they had entered for the grand prize—a clerical husband—felt themselves bound to be always in training for that great event, which might be run off at any moment; and, as the early morning exercise gave them a splendid appetite for breakfast, there was really no great hardship in sitting out a short service. To the unanalytical laity, who met them coming from these early devotions, in their black, prim, pious-looking garb, they appeared in the light of misguided saints, who had mistaken the age, and had been suddenly awoke from a long sleep into which they had fallen at some part of King Edward the Confessor's reign; the plain fact being that they were ordinary young ladies

indulging in a harmless hobby, not without ulterior motives. Then of course, there was the usual Wednesday evening service, and on the slightest provocation, such as a feast, a fast, or a Saint day, there would be early service, matins and vespers.

Then there was always some collection to be made for schools, or treats, or excursions, a new lecturn or a baldachino, a new window or a carved oak screen, or one of the thousand and one things which may be added to a Gothic church; and Wilfrid Brinkhurst although a rather shy boy and having nothing pushing in his composition, made a splendid collector, simply because he was so thoroughly in earnest. The idea that he was begging never entered his head, he asked for subscriptions as though it

must be a pleasure and a privilege to subscribe, and it was only very hardened people who could refuse him.

In all but reading and preaching the young acolyte almost did the duties of a curate, and he began to feel as though the Church were really his calling; but having exhibited qualities which if well cultivated, would be likely to make him a very acute stock-jobber, Mr. Brinkhurst determined on bringing him up to follow that pleasant trade, by which a man may win or lose a fortune with even greater facility than at *rouge et noir*.

Wilfrid knew this, and the thought of it sometimes made him unhappy; he felt a sincere regard for Mr. Sparman, which the latter appreciated, and the idea of parting was painful to both.

Helen too, began to take an interest in the young priest; when he visited the Brinkhurst mansion, and sat talking with her brother on ecclesiastical architecture, or decorations, vestments, monasteries, and the like, she sometimes felt almost carried away by his enthusiasm, and when the servant of the Church happened to look up and catch sight of the beautiful rapt face, with its classically simple *coiffure* of golden hair, she reminded him of some of the lovely saints who died for their faith in the good old times when religion was cultivated with that ardour which is now such a rare exception. But after regarding her as a saint, with a feeling near akin to worship, there came the sense of admiration for her as a woman, the sensual clashing with, and triumphing

over the spiritual, as it always has done and always will do, however carefully people may try to conceal the fact even from themselves, and the Rev. Richard Sparman at such times almost doubted whether celibacy was actually necessary to the proper service of his one cold mistress—the Church. Meanwhile the High Church clerygyman, or the "Ritualist" as some of the profane termed him, had occupied his post for nearly a year, and it is not to be supposed that the Old Church party quietly resigned themselves to the visitation. They talked about him regularly every Sunday, and not unfrequently during the week, and if backbiting could have had all the effect that those who indulged in it desired, Mr. Sparman would not have remained in the place three months.

Much to their chagrin, however, he not only continued his ministrations, but actually drew away a very considerable portion of the Old Church congregation.

Most of the City gentlemen and their families—who constituted the greater part of the population—being tolerably well educated, were not bigoted; the younger ones especially saw no great harm in returning to some of the ceremonial which had edified their forefathers before the Reformation. The new church was handsome, the singing was led by trained choristers, looking cherubic in their white surplices, who chanted and intoned with precision; the old church was hideously ugly, there was no intoning, not even an anthem, and the hymns were led by a few leather-lunged charity children, whose

voices would have only done them credit as costermongers. What wonder then, that those dwellers in Fritham and its neighbourhood, who—from force of habit, or from force of wife or mother—found it necessary to sit in some edifice, and undergo a certain ceremony once or twice every Sunday, what wonder that they should choose the better edifice with its more pleasing ceremony? The whole service at St. Ursula's was "so beautifully æsthetic," as some one remarked, and from that time whoever made allusions to "the scarlet lady," or "returning to Romanism," and the like, was forthwith staggered by a term which he probably did not quite understand, but which sounded grand and might mean anything.

Moreover, Mr. Sparman's sermons were

a distinctive feature; he never bought them, and he disdained to use any of these handy books of stock phrases by the aid of which a man of ordinary education can produce sermons with almost as much facility as differing buildings can be exacted out of a child's box of bricks. A pure labour of love was the composition of his discourses, they were models of scholarship and research delivered with fervour; those oft-recurring common property sentences, so wearying to the sensitive ear, were never allowed to suggest to his congregation that sermons were for the most part as easy to write as a commercial letter.

The Old Church party consisted for the most part of the well-to-do and old-established tradespeople, together with a

few gentlefolk of rather advanced age, to whom a radical change either in Sunday observances, or in any other of their little amusements, would have been a cruel wrench; the fact of their being intolerant was of course only part and parcel of this state of mind.

One or two of the more highly-respectable tradesmen had been to St. Ursula's to judge for themselves, and returned to their homes and their heavy dinners declaring the whole thing to be disgraceful, insomuch that they ate even more than usual. "To see that man," said Mr. Chorker, the confectioner, in pious anger to his wife and family, when he had carefully helped them to the roast pork, and served everyone with gravy, "to see him, bowing and scraping and saying, 'how d'ye do?' like, first to

one clergyman and then to the other, and then turning his back on us, and walking about and bowing his head, and then some one ringing a little bell, and he lifts the cup right up above his head, and waves it about as if he was going to drink our healths; aye, and he does drink too, when all the people have done, I thought he was never a-going to leave off; and then the incense, which a little boy kept swinging it about till it nearly stiffled me—my lor! why burnt brown paper's a fool to it; and then they hands round a bag on a long stick to put your money in, but they didn't kitch me, not if I knowed it. I should have bust out a laughing at the whole affair, only I thought I might get turned out. But I'd forgive 'em all that and welcome, let 'em make fools

of themselves if they like." Here Mr. Chorker left off eating, the better to express his extreme toleration, "but they has the confessional—fancy that in a Christian country! Don't let me kitch any of you girls going to confessional, or out you go, neck and crop." Mr. Chorker having glared at his three daughters and pointed towards the door with the blade of his knife, brought its handle sharply down on the table, thereby intending to denote the inflexible character of his determination. He then went on with his dinner, eating two or three more helpings of pork, with appropriate greens and potatoes, after which he drank three or four glasses of very fiery port, and lapsed into a semi-comatose state for the remainder of the day, wondering at tea-time how it came

about that he always felt so sleepy on Sunday after dinner, although he "hadn't drunk nothing to speak of."

Other highly respectable tradesmen—such as Mr. Sandeman, the grocer, and Mr. Waites, the butcher, went through somewhat similar processes, after they had paid a visit to St. Ursula's to judge for themselves. Once or twice on Sunday evenings they dropped in at each others' houses to smoke a pipe and to talk the matter over, thereby exciting each other to fresh indignation. That something ought to be done, and that talking would not do it, they were all perfectly agreed. At length Mr. Chorker, who was warmest on the subject—especially when the subject of the confessional happened to be mentioned—said with emphasis, while he pointed the sealing-

waxed end of his pipe at each of his friends in turn:

"You mark my words, you won't do nothing with him till you bring him up before the courts."

The two other gentlemen nodded their heads assentingly, but an uncertainty as to how many courts they would have to bring him before struck both of them simultaneously, and they scratched their heads dubiously as they thought of the heavy expenses of the county court.

"No, that you won't," continued Mr. Chorker, "and though I've got a family to bring up, I don't mind giving my fiver towards putting down that blessed confessional — drat the confessional, I say!"

Now although Mr. Waites and Mr. Sandeman derived a certain amount of

pleasure, and experienced a decided accession of virtue and self-complacency after having met and abused the malpractices of St. Ursula's incumbent, no definite idea had up to that time formed itself in their not quickly-operating minds as to their willingness to pay money for the purpose of coercing any given individual into performing a ceremonial in a manner which from long usage they considered as nearly correct as anything on earth could be. It had not occurred to them that everything in life must be paid for either in purse or in person, and that even the virtuous pleasure of forcing a man to follow the right path—that is to say, the path which they considered the right one—could not be indulged in gratuitously; they had really never asked themselves whether they

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cared about the matter sufficiently to induce a parting with coin, of which they so well understood the value. But after having talked so much on the subject, they thought it would look mean to back out, so they immediately signified their willingness to subscribe a similar amount.

"Very good, that's what I call business," said Mr. Chorker, "and we'll ask Mr. Graves, the undertaker, to join us, and I'll mention the matter to the Rector."

When Mr. Graves was sounded on the subject, he avowed himself quite averse from the confessional, he thought it had a bad effect on the youthful mind, but being as he considered, remotely connected with the Church in general, without reference to special doctrines, he

declined to subscribe, or to be seen in the matter, lest it should have a bad effect on his trade.

The Rector sympathised with the trio, and promised that if they would constitute themselves into a committee for the collection of subscriptions and the conduct of the case, he would mention the subject to his loyal parishioners, with a view to influencing subscriptions, but he declined to allow his name to be used in any way.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAW.

Religion-making man from zone to zone,
Scouts every Deity except his own,
And when agreed on one all-wise dispenser,
Will fight about the swinging of a censer.

The rich members of the Old Church party laid down their money with a readiness which contrasted strangely with their reluctance to give for the purpose of building schools, or providing a treat for the charity children; no doubt it occurred to them that these latter chances of doing good presented

themselves with unwelcome frequency, but they might never again have the opportunity of helping to rid the parish of obnoxious doctrines.

In an incredibly short space of time subscriptions to a very considerable amount flowed in, and the Rector having mentioned a solicitor named Tubby, occupying offices in a street near Doctors' Commons, as *the* man to conduct the case, Messrs. Chorker, Sandeman, and Waites sallied forth one bright May morning in high spirits to give their instructions.

The omnibus would have taken them to the City in about half-an-hour; but they felt that the eyes—if not of Europe —at least of Fritham, were upon them, and having calculated that the exact fare of a cab would amount to only a

trifle more than the public vehicle, they decided on employing a passing four-wheeler, especially as it occurred to Mr. Chorker and to Mr. Waites, almost simultaneously, that it would "all come out of the Fund."

The journey up to town seemed almost like a pleasure excursion, and they were all very jovial over the business in hand, wondering how Mr. Sparman would feel when he came to be served with a writ, or a summons, or a "subpœna," Mr. Sandeman suggested, or whatever might be the correct name of the instrument.

Just as they arrived at the foot of London Bridge, however, Mr. Waites suddenly became moody and silent, remembering that his assistant having newly come from Whitechapel, where

most of the people know the weights and the parts to a nicety—would not be equal to the *finesse* of cutting chuck steak for buttock or thick flank, and these two latter for rump-steak, or of charging best end of neck of mutton at middle-of-the-loin price. He recollected with pain, a splendid bit of buttock—a perfect picture—almost all of which he could have sold as rump-steak in a neighbourhood so generally ignorant of parts as Fritham. He rallied a little when they paid the cabman, and were abused by that legally oppressed functionary for giving him as little as they possibly could with safety. On approaching Mr. Tubby's office they became a little nervous and excited over the business, not knowing what sort of man Mr. Tubby might be; they

pictured him as some high and mighty legal magnate, who, though not disdaining to take their money, might treat them with coldness and contumely, looking upon them, perhaps, as medlers and busybodies, who would be better occupied in minding their shops; and they began to wonder why they should have troubled themselves so much about what really concerned them so little.

Getting a strong whiff of that peculiar odour of fermented sugar and water, mixed with sawdust and stale tobacco-smoke, which so often rushes out between the swing doors of a public-house, Mr. Waites suggested that they should take a drop of something before waiting on the solicitor. Mr. Sandeman and the proposer of the motion were satisfied with ordering a glass of stout

each ; but Mr. Chorker, having reflected a moment and decided to put it all down to the Fund, preferred a glass of sherry.

The ascent of the one flight of stairs to the great man's office seemed to affect their wind much more than a similar number of stairs would have done in their own homes; and by the time that Mr. Chorker had demanded Mr. Tubby, of a dark and sinister-looking clerk, whose hair had the appearance of a sealskin cap, the conscientious confectioner was quite out of breath.

Mr. Tubby sent out word from his private room that he would see them in a few minutes, and during that time they occupied themselves in contemplating the discoloured boxes, and some

still more discoloured papers—which filled the shelf running round the room —with a much more intense absorption than could be accounted for by the external interest possessed by those articles.

Presently a spring bell sounded, and the sealskin-haired clerk ushered the trio into Mr. Tubby's private office, Mr. Chorker first, his two coadjutors following closely, apparently very fearful lest they should tread on each others' heels.

Having placed their hats under their respective chairs, the three gentlemen in order to survey the room, turned their heads from left to right and *vice versa*, in perfect unison, like so many automata, while Mr. Tubby finished examining the endorsements of a bundle of papers—not that he expected to find anything there,

but because he thought it more imposing than meeting his clients' eyes directly they entered. He was a short, stout—or as some people called him "podgy"—man, of about sixty, with iron-grey hair, and features which rather suggested the idea that he might have graduated in the pugilistic prize-ring. The tufts of hair on the backs of his fingers were nearly as bushy as his eyebrows, which people often wondered he did not shave as closely as the rest of his face. He was dressed in good black cloth with a white necktie, and might have been easily mistaken for a master undertaker in his best walking-suit. Mr. Chorker sat a little in front of his brother tradesmen, and Mr. Waites no sooner caught sight of the solicitor than he evinced a strong desire to say some-

thing privately to Mr. Sandeman, and was quite unable to refrain from whispering behind his hand, "Isn't he the very image of old Graves?"

"Exactly what I was thinking," murmured Mr. Sandeman.

Having completed his inspection of the bundle of papers Mr. Tubby placed them on the table, and looking up at his three clients beamed on them reassuringly:

"And what can I have the pleasure of doing for you, gentlemen?" he asked in his blandest manner.

Mr. Chorker, as spokesman for the party, then proceeded to state their business in a manner as concise and lucid as could be expected of a small baker's son who had been educated about forty years ago.

"Ah! it's astonishing how many of these cases we meet with now," said Mr. Tubby with a sigh, which led his hearers to believe that he strongly disapproved of such practices, the fact being that he attended a ritualistic Church of most advanced character, preferring, as he sometimes said to remonstrant friends, "a good performance to a bad one, any day in the week." The sigh really denoting a mixture of pity and contempt for people who were unable to tolerate in their neighbours' religious ceremonials a little more colour than they choose to infuse into their own, in an age when School-Board education will, in the course of a generation or two cause the natural death of all homage to the supernatural. "Yes," continued Mr. Tubby, taking up

another bundle of papers, "I've two or three in London, besides some in the provinces—very extraordinary the growth of this sort of thing!" Whether he meant the Ritualism or the endeavour to put it down was a point which did not occur to his three clients.

"You see, sir," said Mr. Chorker, now quite at his ease, and his usual flow of language in full force, "you see, what I principally objects to is the confessional. They may have their flags and their banners, and their incense, and their bowings and their scrapings, and their black and white boys, and their red and white boys, and their walks round, and their waving the cup over their heads, and all the rest of their tomfoolery—let 'em have all that and welcome I says, but what I do say is,

put a stopper on the confessional, it plays the deuce with the young men and young women, makes 'em priest-ridden and afraid to call their souls their own—put the extinguisher on that, and give 'em all the rest, if they want it—that's what I say."

While the energy with which this burst of eloquence was uttered caused Mr Chorker to mop his spacious forehead with a yellow silk pocket-handkerchief, Mr Waites, who was rather slow of speech, grunted a little and said, as though his thoughts came even less rapidly than his words:

"Well, I don't know so much about that—I don't like all them knee-shakings and noddings, and walking round the Church, holding up flags and singing, like a lot of Odd-Fellows

going to a funeral," and Mr Waites shook his head surlily several times, with the air of a man fully determined not to pay his money for nothing.

"No, I don't like all that fuss and nonsense," said Mr Sandeman, who thought be would be looked on as a nonentity and less educated than the the others if he remained silent.

"Well, but you'd better throw all that in," pursued Mr Chorker, with impatient persuasiveness. Why, what's the good? if you stop him at it one day, he'll do it again the next, and it don't do nobody no harm; but the confessional making bits of girls and boys confess to 'em till they don't know whether they stands on their heads or their heels; there! that confessional, it makes my blood boil to think of it, that

it do," and Mr Chorker was so moved at the thought of the abomination that he was obliged not only to wipe his forehead again, but to extend the operation over the whole expanse of his shining bald occiput, ruffling up the fringe of hair which grew just below, till he looked—as Mr Waites said afterwards—"like a bladder o' lard with a birch-broom chucked at it."

Mr Tubby surveyed his three clients with an amused smile, and said in his blandest manner, "I may as well tell you before we go any further that, as regards the confessional, you can do nothing."

Mr Chorker paused abruptly in his mopping process, and his lower jaw fell at least an inch. "Not do nothing with him about the confessional?" he said,

with that peculiar angry movement of the head which may be taken to denote an inclination to jump down your opponent's throat.

Mr Tubby smilingly shook his head.

"Why, you don't mean to say that the confessional's a Church of England ——that the Church of England allows it?" asked Mr Chorker, as though he would hardly believe Mr Tubby if he answered in the affirmative.

"The Establishment does not enjoin it," replied the lawyer; "but it does not expressly forbid it; therefore, you could not make it the subject of legal proceedings."

Mr Chorker looked into space with his mouth open for a second or two, and then he blurted out, "Well then, I don't see what's the good of an Estab-

lishment, it might as well let 'em all do just as they likes. Confessional's a thing that ought to be abolished, and yet it can't be touched. We can't do nothing then, to stop his little games?"

"Oh, I did not say that," replied Mr Tubby, enjoying his client's discomfiture, but at the same time wishing to earn an honest penny. "I think you said that he raised the cup and paten above his head?"

"Yes," replied Mr Chorker promptly, at the same time feeling a little uncertain. "You saw him raise the cup above his head?" he added, appealing to Mr Waites.

"Well, I see him do such a lot of things that I shouldn't like to swear to what I did see," replied Mr Waites,

angry with himself for being such an indifferent witness.

"Oh, yes!" said Mr Sandeman positively, "I saw him elevate the elements distinctly, it's well known that he does so."

"Now you come to mention it, I must have seen him too," said Mr Waites, who had apparently been lost in thought on the subject.

"Oh! yes there's not the least doubt about it," resumed Mr Chorker.

"Well then, you'll be able to floor him on the elements. I floored a man only the other day on that very point, and had him suspended," said Mr Tubby, rubbing his hands with the keen enjoyment which a sportsman might evince in narrating some clever feat. "He doubled about and swore that he

didn't raise them above his eyebrows, but there were a cloud of witnesses who swore they'd seen him do it; then we had him on the adoration of the elements, although he stuck out hard and fast that he didn't kneel to them, but only bowed at them, However, that point was decided in our favour too, and he got suspended."

Mr Waites smiled grimly—it was a consolation to think that he had not paid his money for nothing, Mr Sandeman maintained his usual decorous expression, and Mr Chorker looked extremely dissatisfied. To be told that the very object which had induced him to move in the matter could not be attained, was certainly very annoying. However, he had no choice but to appear to be satisfied; having once begun

he must proceed, or expose himself to the gibes and jeers of the whole body of Fritham subscribers.

So Mr Tubby having taken down full instructions, and assuring his clients that he would take the necessary steps and report progress to them from time to time, bowed them out, thankful that the ignorance and intolerance of his fellow-creatures produced him such a comfortable income.

Without more than the usual amount of delay the case was set down in the papers for trial, and Mr Chorker had the pleasure of reading in the law notices, "The office of the judge promoted by James Chorker *v* the Rev R. Sparman." But when he remembered that however the suit might succeed, the confessional would still remain un-

forbidden, he gnashed his teeth, and felt as though he had the much maligned Dead-Sea fruit in his mouth.

In one way and another the suit took up a good deal of time, Mr Tubby wrote to him very frequently, requesting his attendance relative to the advisability of subpœnaing certain witnesses, or anent some point which appeared provokingly trivial to a mind not deeply impressed with the beautiful delicacy and intricacy of English law in general, and Ecclesiastical law in particular; all these letters and attendances justly served to swell Mr. Tubby's little bill of costs, for people who indulge in such luxuries of litigation ought not to grudge paying for them.

Mr Chorker did not object to the expenditure of the money, principally

because beyond the five pounds he had irretrievably sunk, it did not come out of his pocket; but it occupied his time, and consequently cost him money. Instead of going down to the Corn Market in Mark Lane, and buying his flour after the most careful inspection and tasting, he sent his man, who was far from being such a good judge of the article, the consequence being that neither his bread nor his pastry was of such a beautifully white colour as it used to be. So that some of his best families transferred their custom to his rival and bitter enemy, Trifler, who lived only a little higher up the road on the other side of the way. This was gall and wormwood to a man whose business was his pleasure, and who lamented the loss of a small sum of money as much as if

it had been his own flesh and blood, perhaps even more so; for his relations could not rank higher in his affections than best friends, in grief for whose misfortunes the analytical will always detect a certain admixture of pleasure. But Mr Chorker could hardly be called peculiar in failing to experience even an infinitisimal amount of pleasure in the loss of money.

At the proper season—or in speaking of law-suits it would perhaps be more strictly correct to say some time after the proper season—the case came on for hearing. For the promoter of the suit there appeared Mr Head Senter, Q.C., nephew to the well-known firm of solicitors, Senter, Sercombe, Fehrens, and Roundem; by the aid of a cloud of highly respectable witnesses the learned

gentleman proved the case to such a nicety, as would have been impossible to disprove, except by weightier testimony and a more eminent counsel.

Although Mr Sparman's rich uncle would have willingly provided him with five or six counsel, the young priest chose to conduct his own case. Disdaining all subterfuge, he admitted all that was alleged against him, merely urging, with the usual clerical illogicality, that he surely could not be wrong in doing such things as our ancestors had done for centuries, that the extra respect paid to the sacred elements by raising them above his head was purely a question of feeling, and that the whole matter was one of which a court of law could not properly take cognisance.

The peculiar intonation with which the defendant's speech was delivered made it sound like a sermon. It contained the usual allusions to Church matters during the reign of King Edward the Sixth, the First Prayer-book, &c.

The Court having taken time to consider its decision, treated Mr Sparman to a monition, and condemned him to bear the costs of the suit.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW LIFE.

What strange, and varied sports, and games fantastical,
Are played before the Courts Ecclesiastical.

Messrs. Chorker, Sandeman, & Waites went to St. Ursula's the first Sunday after the judgment had been delivered, for the purpose of gloating over its effect. The service was read by a stranger, who raised the sacred elements no higher than his nose, a reformation which delighted the trio; they had humbled their enemy, and made him

conform to the rules of the Established Church, as enforced by them. But when they heard on their way to their homes that Mr. Sparman would no more officiate at St. Ursula's, they experienced mixed feelings. First, they were a little remorseful at having crushed their enemy, who, after all, was reported to be "not a bad sort;" then they doubted whether he had not risen superior to them, in being obedient to the law, but in refusing to minister except according to his own lights.

His successor managed to steer just clear of illegal practices, while retaining all the gorgeous ceremonial, the black sisterhood, and the confessional, insomuch that Mr. Chorker not unfrequently asked himself what was the good of his having troubled to go to "those blessed arches?"

The Reverend Richard Sparman felt sick at heart about the litigation, and even had he worsted his persecutors he would have still felt humiliated, and unwilling to continue his ministrations in a place where they were only partially appreciated.

Before proceedings were commenced against him, he had begun to grow weary of the amateurish and perfunctory devotions of the majority of his supporters. He was too much a soldier of the Church to remain long content with such common-place employments as intoning services, preaching, and visiting like an ordinary parson. He was always yearning for those grand mediæval times when the Church was looked upon as something more than a mere means of earning a living.

The monition was the last straw which broke the back of this poor clerical camel; a member of the Church of England, simply because he happened to have been brought up in its fold, he was always looking back with regret to the days when we were all Roman Catholics, without any such paltry distinctions as High, Low, and — what for want of a better title may be named after the architecture of the buildings wherein it usually prevails—Churchwarden. He was never likely to become what the Establishment would call a pervert, or a convert as the elder branch terms it, to the Church of Rome, but he looked upon the Reformation as a suicidal mistake, and he did not hesitate to avow his opinion in an aphoristic way, which he was uncertain whether he

had begotten or adopted. "The religion which reforms is lost," he used frequently to say, not from the pulpit, but in private; and when the disestablishment of the Irish Church became an accomplished fact, he pointed to it as the beginning of that end which would result in the abolition of a State Church in England. Not that he really attached much importance to the prophecies of the profane and vain babblers who foretold such an outcome.

One day, when Helen Brinkhurst questioned him on the subject, he said confidently:

"I think we shall manage to outlast this century, charm the Nonconformists never so wisely. Can't you imagine the grand scene in the House when such a motion shall be seriously brought for-

ward? The mustering and marshalling against it of every shade of Liberal and Conservative, and everyone who ever had a grandfather. Ireland is one thing, practically it is almost as far off as Japan; members could discuss calmly enough the religious interests of a people whom no one ever believed to be capable of considering any question dispassionately, especially if it should happen to seriously affect them. But when the question of English Church disestablishment comes to be debated in the English House of Commons, that will be a sight worth going many miles to see."

His enthusiasm so lighted up his thin, finely-cut face, that Helen thought he looked quite handsome. He was certainly not deficient in natural advantages, and a suit of tweeds made by a good

tailor would have made him fit to hold his own against any one.

No sooner did he receive the monition than he wrote to his uncle, requesting him to procure another incumbent for St. Ursula's. Without a very laborious search the article was found, and sent to Fritham by the earliest conveyance. Mr Sparman's congregation rallied round him with that effusion which is generally lavished on a persecuted priest of any denomination, whether he be a Roman Catholic who chooses to defy the Pope, an Anglican who elevates the elements, or a Dissenter who wears a cassock.

In the present instance they wanted to build him a church in which he would be free to do exactly as he should please, even to swinging the elements round his head in a censer. Even Mr

Brinkhurst was roused out of his indifferentism, and offered to put down his hundred towards building the reverend gentleman a place of his own, if it was only to let those paltry tradesmen see that they couldn't have it all their own way; and the exuberant stock-jobber opined moreover, that he knew several fellows "in the House" who wouldn't mind subscribing "a pony," or even "a monkey" towards the proposed, or any other object which might be recommended to them by a friend.

But Mr Sparman, while thanking his supporters for their kindly feelings towards him, firmly declined to remain in the district; to be served with a monition was to him almost as humiliating as flogging is to a good soldier. As a priest he could never fearlessly officiate

again where the infliction had taken place.

The evening before his departure he called to take leave of the Brinkhurst family. The master of the house was out at a public dinner, whence he would return in extreme good-humour at about eleven o'clock. Mrs Brinkhurst, her son, and daughter were all at home, glad of a quiet evening.

Wilfrid's feelings showed themselves in his handsome face; the one friend that he had found during his uneventful life was about to leave him; in addition to this loss his occupation would be gone. He had seen the new incumbent, the Rev Augustus Fink, and felt that he could not work with him. He was a vain, frivolous little man, who seemed to enjoy Church millinery for its own

sake, and for the same reason that a giddy young officer takes pleasure in being seen in his gay uniform on grand occasions, because of the sensation it causes among the ladies, and the envy he fancies it excites in the breasts of lay gentlemen. He lacked the fervour and earnestness of Mr Sparman, and Wilfrid knew it at a glance.

"You've quite made up your mind to leave us then?" said Mrs Brinkhurst, looking up for a moment from a gorgeous piece of embroidery on white silk—representing in its centre a lamb holding a flag in a very uncomfortable, not to say impossible manner—intended to be used as a banner in the processions at St. Ursula's.

"Quite," replied Mr Sparman, decisively.

"Have you fixed on the scene of your future labours? I know you couldn't be happy without hard work of some kind."

"Well, I don't know about hard work," replied Mr Sparman with a thoughtful smile, looking far away into space, "but of work that I like I can do a good deal."

"He's going to be an abbot down in the country, 'ma, and I wish I could go with him," said Wilfrid.

"Not exactly an abbot," said Mr. Sparman, smiling deprecatingly, "but merely the self-constituted chief of a monastery."

"How very mediæval!" said Helen, "and, pray, where is it situated?"

"In Lancashire, on the extreme outskirts of a large manufacturing town."

"But you'll have to build or alter, I suppose; you couldn't tolerate anything but Gothic, of course," said Mrs Brinkhurst, without looking up from her work.

"No, everything's ready for me," replied Mr Sparman.

"What! a ruined old place built centuries ago, covered with ivy and all crumbling to pieces? How very romantic!" said Helen.

"No, it's quite modern," replied Mr Sparman, "built only a few years ago for the same purpose, as I'm going to use it."

"How strange! Didn't it answer, then?" asked Mrs. Brinkhurst.

"It experienced one frightful *fiasco*, which, I fear, brought it into utter disrepute."

"How interesting! Pray tell us all about it," said Helen.

"Well, it won't take long to tell. The Principal inconsiderately left his monks to themselves for three days while he went to town on business; they were all young, the eldest—a youth of three-and-twenty, who was supposed to have become reformed and regenerated from a life of bestial dissipation—led them astray. He sent for meat and drink, they indulged so freely that some became stupid, lying about on the benches and on the floor; others became like raving maniacs; the children who came to be schooled, and their mothers and fathers who came for various purposes, saw the state of things and mentioned it to their friends, who came to jeer and to enjoy the scandal. Brother John—

the cause of all the mischief—lost his temper with a burly engineer who laughed at him. At that time it seems, he was sufficiently sober to fight properly; he punished the engineer very severely. Some of his friends interposed, the fight became general, and the police from the neighbouring town had to be called in. When the Principal returned what could he do? He broke up the place in disgust and went abroad."

"How disgraceful!" said Wilfrid indignantly.

"Shocking!" said Mrs Brinkhurst.

Helen remained silent, but she could hardly refrain from smiling, the idea of the drunken, fighting monk-boys seemed so eminently absurd and out of character.

"I suppose you'll teach the children of the neighbourhood?" asked Mrs Brinkhurst.

"Oh yes, and tend the sick; and there's a chapel attached. We shall have matins and vespers every day."

"How very nice! and will you shave your head?" asked Helen gravely.

"Really, I've never thought of that," replied Mr Sparman, and then, after thinking for a moment or two, "Oh, yes, I think so. Although monasteries are not now prevalent in England, monks wear the tonsure everywhere; without it I should feel as inappropriate as would a judge sitting on his bench without his wig. I don't mean to say there's any virtue in either, but we're so generally incapable of looking at things in the abstract, that we really can't

afford to abolish these useless externals. Oh yes, of course I must adopt the tonsure."

"It would certainly be the correct thing to do," said Mrs Brinkhurst, "there's a certain amount of illusion and association in those things."

"All the monks would have to wear the tonsure, I suppose?" said Helen, looking at the young enthusiast's waving hair with some regret.

"Certainly, one must have regard to appearances. What an irregular army we should look if some were shorn and some were not!"

"And how many will the place accommodate?" asked Helen.

"About twenty-five."

"I wish you'd let me go, 'ma," said Wilfrid querulously, stretching out one

leg, and trampling on a large rose in the carpet pattern.

"You know that I should be perfectly willing, my dear boy, but your father wouldn't hear of it, I know," replied Mrs Brinkhurst.

"But you wouldn't like to have your head shaved, Wilfred?" suggested his sister.

"I shouldn't mind it a-bit," said Wilfrid, eagerly, "besides, you don't have it shaved all over, do you, Mr. Sparman?"

"No, only the crown."

"I should like it above everthing," resumed Wilfrid. "I hate the very idea of that nasty, dirty Stock Exchange, that 'pa's always talking of apprenticing me to."

"You know how happy I should be

to have him Mrs Brinkhurst," said Mr Sparman, rising to take leave.

Helen gave him her hand. He held it for a moment, and a thrill ran through his veins—whether of electricity, or some still more occult fluid, the learned have not yet told us. Often in his lonely cell he remembered that leave-taking, and Helen's beautiful face and form would intrude themselves on his thoughts when he was trying to employ them otherwise.

CHAPTER VII.

A RUNAWAY.

> Was it a wish to shirk the world's great fight,
> That made him yearn to be a cenobite ?
> Or did he hope to 'scape a dread damnation ?
> By flight from unconverted man's temptation ?

Mr SPARMAN took with him twenty out of the five and twenty that his monastry was calculated to accommodate, and in less than a fortnight the applicants from the neighbouring town more than sufficed to complete the number; several had to be refused. Mr Sparman's fame had preceded him, and although there

can be no doubt as to the tendency of the age towards Rationalism, it seems equally certain that a large and ever-increasing proportion of the well-to-do population is inclined to drift into those ritualistic religious exercises which, until quite recently, were believed to be incapable of ever again obtaining a footing. The responsibility, of course, rests on the shoulders of those good people who, in their energetic endeavours to avoid anything pleasing to the eye or ear, as *ipso facto* tinged with Romanism, rushed into an extreme of plainness and ugliness. The present reaction is as little surprising as the relapse of a drunkard after enforced abstinence.

The Dissenters may be pointed to as combining fervour with an almost total

absence of ornament or adventitious attraction; they are passing through that stage through which the Church of England has already passed; slowly and surely they will drift into Rationalism.

It cannot be believed that Nonconformists of either sex really prefer their —with few exceptions—hideous edifices, the bare whitewashed walls, and flat ceilings, to a well-built and handsomely decorated Gothic church. It would be as reasonable to expect that all young quakeresses have a really honest preference for their ugly, tasteless dress. The Society of Friends is growing smaller and smaller, and it is becoming more and more difficult to keep a Dissenting congregation together without some entertaining ceremonial. Even now a few of their ministers wear the cassock, from

that to stole and chasuble is only a step; their present "platform" is "simplicity of worship," any advance towards an imposing ritual must of course not be rapid enough to alarm the zealous sensitiveness of the elders; but what body of clergy would not prefer the most florid vestments and fittings to infidelity? For if the latter should prevail there would be no one to pay them their salaries.

When Mr. Sparman had been three weeks in his new habitation, he wrote Wilfrid Brinkhurst a letter, dwelling on the general beauties of monastic life, the calm, the quiet, and the freedom from that fussiness which had been so irksome to him at Fritham. At Clumpton Abbots there were no tea-parties, or croquet meetings, no frivoli-

ties to disturb the mind from heavenly contemplation. They had plenty of employment when they were not celebrating services, or schooling the neighbouring children, or tending the sick; they occupied themselves in their large garden which supplied them with fruits and vegetables, or they mended their socks, which their long walks wore out very fast. Then he went on to explain how the idea of going barefoot out of doors with only sandals, in the orthodox fashion, had been abandoned on the ground of expedience, how they breakfasted off porridge and milk, dined off cabbage and potatoes, boiled occasionally with a small piece of lean meat, except on Fridays when they made a scanty meal off fish and pease-pudding. He spoke in glowing terms of the clearness

and purity of a crystal spring which dripped from a shady nook in their back garden, this being their sole drink, except a little rough cyder which a friendly farmer sent in occasionally. The letter wound up by describing how light, elastic, and ethereal the writer felt, and how favourable to meditation he found such a state to be; but he omitted to say how sometimes when alone in his cell his thoughts conjured up the form of a beautiful girl, and how like Antony he tried to chase it away.

Although Mr. Sparman did not intend that his letter should make Wilfrid more dissatisfied with his home and with his prospects than he already was, it certainly had this effect. The picture which his friend drew of the beautiful Cenobitic life, made him feel all the

more disgusted with the idea of having to spend his days on the Stock-Exchange, which, from the little he had seen, heard, and read of it, he imagined to bear a very close resemblance to hell.

He asked his father for permission to join the monastery at Clumpton Abbots, but the refusal he met with was only what he had expected.

"A pretty game, indeed!" laughed Mr Brinkhurst good humouredly; "how long would you stop there, I wonder? Why, you'd never hear the last of it on the Stock-Exchange. If you went and got your head shaved they'd knock your hat off half-a-dozen times a day to see if the hair had grown."

"But I don't want to go on the Stock-Exchange," objected Wilfred.

"Nonsense, boy! do you think you're

going to get your living by being a monk ?"

"Yes, the monastery is self-supporting."

"But how are you going to keep a wife and family ?"

"Monks don't have wives and families, I should have thought you knew that, 'pa."

"But, drat the boy! you don't think you're going to be a monk all your life, do you?"

"Yes, of course 'pa? once a monk always a monk."

"Rubbish! a pretty idea for a boy who's been brought up like a gentleman, this comes of having a mad priest in the place."

"I beg you won't talk of Father Sparman in that way, pa."

"'Father ?' your grandmother," blurted

out Mr Brinkhurst, though he would have probably been at a loss to give a reason why that ancestor should be alluded to in a contemptuous manner, "When you've been a month or two on the Stock-Exchange you'll forget all that nonsense, and wonder how you could ever have thought of such a thing. I think it quite as well that I decided against sending you to Eton and Oxford, what could I have done with you afterwards? I believe you'll make a precious sharp jobber if you choose, and after all, you know, money makes the man."

"I shall never like it 'pa, besides it seems so immoral."

"Stuff and nonsense! here's a boy telling his father that he's immoral. How is it immoral, pray?"

"Why it's only gambling, and the outside public always loses."

"Fiddle-de-dee, that's their look-out; they go in to win, and sometimes they do win."

"Very seldom, I should think. Look what a disadvantage they stand at, especially if the brokers don't give them the full advantage of the prices—how can the public tell anything about it? when they speculate they don't even know who they're dealing with, it's only gambling, and the Bank—that is, 'the House'—nearly always wins."

"Bah! you silly boy, don't talk about what you know nothing of; how could people buy and sell their stock, unless there was a regular place to do it in and regular men to do it; besides you've been talking about the brokers,

well, of course, there's good and bad in every trade. I don't ask you to be a broker, I'm not a broker, I'm a jobber, and I want you to be a jobber."

"It's no good, I know I shall never take to it," said Wilfrid rather peevishly.

"There, get out with you!" cried his father good-humouredly, "You don't know what you like, you're not old enough; there, go along with you, and don't let me hear anything more about playing at monks."

Wilfrid got himself out the room, but he had no intention of giving up his pet idea; more and more he missed his friend, and pined after the quiet monastic life, and his father, seeing his unsettled state, proposed to take him into his office early in the following week.

The bare idea was so utterly repugnant to Wilfrid's feelings that he decided on avoiding the fate intended for him, by running away from it.

To say "good-bye," to his mother and sister would, he knew, have the effect of frustrating his intention; contenting himself, therefore, with writing an affectionate letter of leave-taking, he left home in the ordinary way, reached the Railway Station, posted his letter in the pillar-box just outside, and travelled third-class in the most prosaic way to Burchester, the nearest station to Clumpton Abbots. His luggage, consisting only of a change or two of linen, was contained in a small leather bag, so that he was able to walk the three miles to the monastery without assistance from man or beast.

He had felt uncertain as to whether he should take with him any apparel beyond that in which he stood up; coats, waistcoats and the like would, he knew, be quite out of place, but a shirt or two would not be a great burden even if they should be useless on account of the rules of the establishment requiring its inmates to wear an under garment of horsehair.

The monastery stood in a large piece of ground enclosed by a flint wall, high enough to intercept the gaze of the curious; Wilfrid pulled the quaint, twisted iron bell handle, with a feeling near akin to that which might be experienced by one of the blessed about to take his seat in heaven after a stormy journey through the troubled sea of life; to this young and fervid imagi-

nation it really seemed like arriving at the margin of the Elysian fields, with that dismal Hades, the Stock-Exchange, frowning grimly behind him.

A young man with his head shaved, with sandles on his unsocked feet, looking the *beau ideal* of a monk of the middle ages, opened the door.

"Is Father Sparman in?"

"Yes," replied the monk, noticing Wilfrid's bag, "but I don't think he can possibly receive any more——"

"If you give him my name, I know he'll see me," interruted Wilfrid; "tell him, please, that Wilfrid Brinkhurst has called."

The young monk walked slowly away, leaving Wilfrid at the open door, so that he could see the garden. He had just time to admire it's scrupulous neat-

ness, when the monk returned, and lowering his eyelids, said in a subdued tone, "This way, please."

The architecture of the building was Gothic, of course, and might be termed pretty, in contradistinction to grand; the days of grand Gothic religious edifices are naturally gone for ever. There are no longer to be found enthusiastic monkish masons and carvers willing to work on the erection and ornamentation of a church or a monastery from the same sheer pity which impels the savage to hew out some elaborately fretted image of his god, which generally assumes the form and features of an ugly edition of himself, with perhaps an extra limb or two to denote superhuman power. Externally St. Joseph's monastery abounded in odd little orna-

mental and useless nooks and excrescences, but it seemed to parody buildings like Westminster Abbey or Antwerp Cathedral, almost as much as Belgravian mansions are parodied by a dolls' house. There was plenty of striving after effect; but as neither money nor labour had been expended in sufficient quantities, the place had a rather pinchbeck air, and looked as though it had tried hard to look considerably more imposing than the estimates could possibly allow. Besides all this, its newness was decidedly against it. A thousand years hence—if it lasted so long—covered with ivy and crumbling to ruin, it might rank as an interesting specimen of nineteenth century Gothic—a style of architecture which like some wine, improves vastly by age. Perhaps one of the

reasons for Perpendicular Gothic being so generally despised is because of its being newer than the more archaic forms.

Internally, St. Joseph's was by no means ambitious; the passages were plain whitewashed; the same stern simplicity of mural adornment distinguished Father Sparman's cell, situate at the extreme end of one of them, and looking out over the open country. The door of the cell stood open, the young monk indicated with a slight movement of the hand that Wilfrid might enter, turned round, and walked away with a slight affectation of mechanicality, or it might perhaps have been a genuine manner induced by his mode of life. He had been there a very short time, but soldierly, physicianly, lawyerly, or priestly

deportments, come almost naturally, and with wonderfully little practice.

Father Sparman rose to greet his visitor, who could not fail to be struck by his appearance. There was the same well-proportioned figure, looking loose and inelegant in its monkish gown; the same finely-cut features, looking thinner by reason of low diet and hard work; the character of his face quite altered by the thoroughness of the tonsure, which had left a line of hair not more than an inch wide over the forehead. He seemed to Wilfrid altogether gaunter and narrower; but he looked his part to perfection; it was one for which he was eminently suited by nature. Just as on the mimic stage some actors are fit for clowns and some for cardinals. It would be highly injudicious to cast

the low comedian for cardinal; he would be sure to provoke mirth in the most serious parts; and, *vice versa*, the tragedian would make one dismal in a low-comedy part.

Let anyone think over his circle of friends, and picture to himself even the most suitable one, clothed in a black gown tied round the waist, his head shaved, and his feet clad in sandals only; the presentment will probably provoke a smile, but to laugh at the appearance of Mr Sparman in his monkish dress was as impossible as for a Churchman to grin at cherubim and seraphim, if he ever had the luck to see those lachrymose personages.

Although altered in appearance, the ex-incumbent of St. Ursula's remained as pleasant and genial as ever. Holding

out his hand to Wilfrid, he smilingly said:

"Why who would have thought of seeing you? Did your father relent then, and give his consent?"

"No, I'm here without his consent," replied Wilfrid, apparently rather enjoying the idea.

"What! a runaway?" asked Mr Sparman in astonishment, and with some alarm, "you've taken a very serious step?"

Wilfrid looked down.

"Yes, I know," he said, after a moment's pause, "but my father was going to place me on the Stock Exchange, and I loathed the very thought of it. I've determined to be a monk; it's the only position in which one can lead a proper life. I thoroughly despise

men that I see in the world following trades or professions."

"Well I don't think you ought to go quite so far as that," said Mr Sparman thoughtfully, "some men are entirely unsuited to such a life."

"But if it's a good life they ought to suit themselves to it," returned Wilfrid eagerly.

"Yes, but how could society exist?"

"I don't think it would be any loss if it were not to exist at all," replied Wilfrid, in a manner expressing the greatest contempt for ordinarily-constituted communities.

"But you couldn't turn the whole earth into a collection of monasteries?" suggested Mr Sparman, almost smiling—enthusiast as he was—at Wilfrid's enthusiasm.

"Why not? a society capable of providing itself with the necessaries of life can want nothing more."

"Yes, but if all the world's inhabitants were organised into monastic societies to-morrow, in the course of a week you'd find every man doing his best to carry on his ordinary business, buying of, and selling to his fellow in the most natural way."

"Just so," assented Wilfrid, "because man is so worldly and depraved that he's incapable of leading a simple life—he has no idea of self-denial; if a luxury is possible, he must have it."

"Yes, the great bulk of mankind is in a too savage state, with too little discipline over their passions, it's only a select few who are at all suited to

monastic life, and I suppose it's just as well that it should be so."

"Ah! you're such a Conservative," said Wilfrid smiling, "that you'd go in for an aristocracy even in religion. I think it would be a good thing if all the earth's inhabitants were to be gathered into monasteries,—how much less striving there would be, how much the hardness of the fight for mere existence would be reduced, wars would be impossible, and as to poverty it could not exist, for the poverty of some is purely the result of riches acquired by others."

"Yes, that's all very well," said Mr Sparman, with a look of comical gravity, "but you've forgotten to provide for one thing."

"What's that?"

"Keeping up the population."

"I never thought of it," said Wilfrid, rather taken by surprise; "but I really don't see that it would be any great loss if the population were not to be kept up. If I had never been, I could not have felt any regret on the subject. The present life is not much to be desired, and of the future we know nothing, it may be as dull as——"

"Ah! but we're told that it will be glorious beyond measure," interrupted Mr Sparman.

"Well, let us hope so," said Wilfrid, brightening a little, "can you manage to find room for me? I can make shift with any corner."

"Of course I can; for the present I can give you a cell that I've used as a storeroom for wood, potatoes, apples, and the like. In a week or two I think

we shall lose one of our inmates, and then you can take his place."

"What is he dying, then?" asked Wilfrid gravely.

"Oh, no! not at all, quite the other way. He's rather too full of life, the restraint is irksome to him, he's just such another as the one who brought ruin on this very place, under its previous chief. If my back were to be turned for one whole day, he'd turn the place into a pandemonium. With one or two like him in each society, your system of universal monasticism wouldn't last a week."

"No, I'm afraid not, the world is too barbarous as yet, but I believe it keeps on improving. A time may come perhaps——"

"Yes, and meanwhile you can help

me correct some of the proofs of my work on transubstantiation and confession."

"I shall be very pleased, but I didn't know you were writing anything."

"Oh, yes! I began before I left Fritham, but there the disturbing influences were too great, there was always a frivolous something or other to do; here I can write it or dream over it by the hour together. By-the-bye, do you know where our Saviour says, 'Take, eat; this is my body?' "

"Yes."

"Well do you know how many other words instead of 'is' He might have used?"

"No, I can't exactly say I do," said Wilfrid reflecting.

"No, well you see that's a great

point in our favour. I know there are thirty or more, but I haven't reckoned up the exact number. I think you'll like to look over the work. I've quoted pretty well every authority that bears on the two subjects—a most laborious undertaking, I can assure you."

"But why take so much trouble?" asked Wilfrid, almost paternally, "the people who believe in the doctrines already won't believe in them any the more for reading your treatise, and you certainly won't make any converts. In fact, no one is ever really radically converted. It's either a matter of self-interest or weak-mindedness; a converted Jew is always ready to be reconverted for a consideration, and a pervert from the Anglican to the Roman Catholic Church is generally weak-minded."

"Fie! I never thought you were so uncharitable, Wilfrid; but surely there's some pleasure in writing a book even if you don't expect to convert anybody by it—*labor ipse voluptas*, work is in itself a pleasure; besides, there's the hope of fame."

"Ah!" sighed Wilfrid, "you might be taken to be younger than I am, you seem to take more pleasure in life."

"Ah! you've not matured sufficiently," returned Mr Sparman benignantly, "in a year or two your spirits will be more robust."

Wilfred was about to make some reply when a loud and discordant braying broke the chain of his thoughts. "Do you keep donkeys?" he asked.

"One."

"What, to ride on?"

"No, to milk. It was a present from Lord Trampleasure, who lives about two miles off over there; he also gave us a cow and two goats, they take their evening meal about this time. Jenny, the donkey, is always the first to let us know the time—there she goes again; and the two goats, Polly and Patty, won't be long before they begin."

"They won't let their master tell an untruth," said Wilfrid as the two goats began to bleat.

"No, I suppose the donkey and the goats are not intellectual enough to have cultivated the virtue of waiting patiently; but the cow, Molly, is much too dignified to say anything unless she's kept waiting for her tea till long after the usual time."

"Or it may be that having a stock of

food in her spare stomach, she can afford to be more indifferent to feeding time."

"That's not unlikely," laughed Mr Sparman, "and I suppose that even cows and donkeys have just as nice differences of character as men, why not? Let us go and feed them."

The Brinkhurst family, though differently affected, were none of them very deeply moved by Wilfrid's flitting.

His mother, of course, grieved somewhat at his loss, but the thought of his sojourn in such a blest abode as a monastery almost consoled her for his absence; and although she hardly dare a hope that he would be allowed to stay there permanently, she pictured herself making frequent trips to see him and enjoy the

shadow of his holiness, with an intensity of anticipation strongly contrasted with that which any pleasure had hitherto given her. Her husband had never been her affinity, she had married him simply because her parents desired her to secure so eligible an establishment. All that was vouchsafed to her as compensation for Cupid's silken fetters, was the strongly forged link of maternal love.

Mr Brinkhurst looked on the matter as a rather good joke. "Stupid young fool!" he said contemptuously, "let him have his fling for a week or two, and then he shall begin work in earnest," and he wrote his son a letter to this effect, which Wilfrid answered, saying that he had chosen the priesthood as a profession, and that if his father did

not choose to give him the necessary University education, he intended to pass his life at the monastery of St Joseph.

Mr Brinkhurst wrote back to him and told him not to make an ass of himself, but to come back that day fortnight without fail, or he would be brought back with a flea in his ear. So the matter dropped almost out of the Stock-jobber's recollection, and he went on "bulling," and "bearing," as though nothing had happened.

Helen missed her brother very little. He was too young to be much of a companion for her, and he delighted not in the same pursuits; she enjoyed life as she found it, he was always wanting to make it something different. In his letter from St. Joseph's he described

Mr Sparman's altered appearance, and Helen pictured him with his head shaved, with his face grown thinner and paler, and she felt a pang of regret that any man should be so misguided.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EARL'S SEAT.

The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pants for the refuge of some rural shade
Where, all his long anxieties forgot
Amid the charms of a sequester'd spot,
Or recollected only to gild o'er,
And add a smile to what was sweet before,
He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,
Lay his old age upon the lap of Ease,
Improve the remnant of his wasted span,
And having liv'd a trifler, die a man.

COWPER: *Retirement.*

Two miles further away from the town of Burchester than St. Joseph's, stood the stately seat of Earl Trampleasure, so surrounded with beautiful beeches, elms,

and oaks, that it could hardly be seen from the road. These trees, enclosed by a flint wall two miles in extent, were a treat to look upon at any time of the year; some of them were older than that part of the mansion which had been built in the reign of Edward the Sixth; a new wing had been added in the reign of Queen Anne, and when Queen Victoria had been on the throne some ten years, the present Earl built a magnificent drawing-room, thrown out from the old one, with handsome glass doors at one end, leading, by a short flight of wide stone steps, on to a large, velvetty lawn, studded over with a few elegantly-shaped flower-beds filled with flowers and leaf-plants, massed together so as to form an effective contrast with each other. Where the lawn ended, the

park, enlivened by a few elms to break its monotony, sloped away towards the road, and the lodge nestled in the most splendidly wooded part of the grounds.

The other end of the drawing-room opened into a conservatory which could hardly be equalled for beauty, built on the ground-plan of a cross with a dome over its intersection, the plants all so carefully arranged as to size, that the whole interior could be seen at a glance; the view from the drawing-room entrance was like a picture from fairy-land. It was objected by some that there were no sequestered nooks convenient for romantic flirtations or serious love-makings, but the owner explained that it was solely to please the eye, not for the benefit of amorous couples. The

paving consisted of encaustic tiles baked to a warm brown. Under the dome stood a large bronze copy of Thorwaldsen's Mercury, holding a cluster of gas jets shaded by opal glasses, and the lighting was completed by a bronze statue of a draped Venus at one end, and at the other, Minerva, each holding burners with similar glasses, the soft light giving the place an air of dreamy enchantment.

The Earl was a man of about forty-five with very dark hair, much inclined to turn grey, as it generally is at that age. During his boyhood and young manhood any hair on the face, except mutton-chop whiskers, was looked upon as a foreign and foppish abomination; so that, being of a strongly conservative nature, he had not succumbed to the

hairy-faced movement; in fact, he would almost as soon have grown a tail as a moustache, and a beard he looked upon as an acquirement only to be tolerated in a returned convict or gold-digger.

He was tall and slim, without the slightest tendency to corporation. It was often a matter of wonder to his friends how a man who took little exercise could possibly manage to keep his figure so well. As an actor he would have no doubt greatly valued the ability, but being an Earl, he would have been happier with more flesh and less dyspepsia, a visitation from which he had never been entirely free, except during his three months' cruise in Sir George Juggleton's comfortable yacht, Zenobia. To the family doctor the head of the house of Trampleasure proved a mine

of wealth, requiring only careful and industrious working, so that according to Sir George's favourite maxim—"the greatest happiness to the greatest number"—the Earl had no right to grumble, for by the constant valetudinarianism of one individual, Doctor and Mrs Barkling, of Burchester, with their eleven children, became more well-fed, and prosperous.

Once, and once only—viz., while the Earl was away on his yachting trip—had the usually wise doctor been foolish enough to nearly quarrel with his bread-and-butter, and it must be confessed that such feelings are somewhat excuseable when a lady of exalted position obstinately persists in being attended during her confinement solely by her own body-servant, and positively refuses

to call in the family physician. Mrs Barkling, however, reminded her husband that, in point of fact, he was the *Earl's* attendant, the Countess never having thought fit to consider herself sufficiently ill to require a doctor. This politic view ultimately obtained, the Earl retained a trusted medical adviser, and Doctor Barkling avoided the loss of a very valuable patient.

To the very marrow of his vertebræ, Earl Trampleasure was a Conservative; on speaking terms with a few select Liberals, to Radicals he barely vouchsafed a nod; but no one of either of these latter schools was ever invited to his beautiful country seat at Stourton Wood. Although occasionally obliged to tolerate their presence at his mansion in Eaton Square, he hated the very sight

of them, and of their families, only a little less than he loathed a Jew. Conservatism was the one strong point in a rather weak character; it could not exactly be said to form part of his religion—which was of course that of the Establishment—it was rather a separate *cultus*, more absorbing, and much more actively attended to than religions ever are, except by those who make them their especial hobby.

Had a son of his been sufficiently ill-advised to join the Liberal party, he would have disowned him with the relentless severity which other fathers mete out to a son making a *mésalliance*. His utterance was timid and rather hesitating, and he cleared his throat behind his hand, much more often than was really necessary. Conscious of these

defects, he seldom spoke in the House of Lords, but his vote and influence could be counted on with that absolute certainty which at present characterises the revolutions of the earth.

Although undoubtedly proud in a certain sense of his unbroken line of honourable ancestors, he treated his inferiors with the same consideration as he did his peers; he was not a man in the least likely to talk any claptrap nonsense about all men being equal in the sight of God—he had far too much respect for the Deity to believe any such thing. He considered that it would be just as reasonable to say that all horses were equal—that the hack, about the pairing of whose progenitors no trouble had been taken, could by any possibility be equal in speed to the

racer, whose parents were chosen for special qualities; but possessing all the most orthodox opinions as to the value of blood and breed in all animals, seemed to make him rather humble than arrogant, he felt a vague sort of thankfulness to Providence for his own pure descent, combined with a slight sense of pity and sympathy for those less highly favoured.

In spite of his riches and honours, his wife, his peerless daughter, Earl Trampleasure could hardly be called a happy man—in fact, it seems impossible for happiness to go beyond a certain degree, either in an earl or in an exciseman. To a staunch Conservative it was very galling to see the Liberals remain in office session after session, merely because his own party was not

sufficiently strong to turn them out; then dire dyspepsia often made him melancholy. His splendid country seat was only a home, after all; it might be bright, it might be dull, it might be miserable, according to the mood of its proprietor, and he, probably, did not derive more pleasure from his exquisite conservatory than a lower middle-class householder experiences in contemplating the vista of his parlour window, decked with two or three fuchsias and a scarlet geranium.

It was now the middle of October; about the beginning of September, the Earl always arrived at Stourton Wood for the purpose of inviting a few friends to shoot partridges, not that he himself ever took any part in the murder, firstly, because the walking would have tired

him too much; secondly, because he was not robust enough to bear the frequent recoil of the gun against his shoulder, and being a rather tender-hearted man, he had a standing presentiment that some of his friends who went out for the purpose of wanton slaughter would return to the house either badly or thoroughly shot by misadventure. Much as he esteemed his friends, he was selfish enough to prefer that they should shoot each other rather than him, so he kept out of the stubble and the turnip fields.

For a nobleman, the Earl was decidedly religious—that is to say, whether he was staying in town or in the country, he went to Church regularly every Sunday morning. When in London he attended that gorgeously de-

corated—and by Evangelicals much disliked—edifice, St. Neuterom, Mayfair, where the style of ceremonial, so impressive to those who have not progressed beyond it into Rationalism, took almost all his senses captive during the time he was in its immediate presence, but before he had completed his luncheon the influence vanished, and he thought no more of it till the following Sunday, when he was again subjected to it. If he went to any place of amusement he liked it to be elegant, well-appointed, and entertaining, and although he by no means acknowledged the fact to himself, this feeling applied to his church-going.

Although his tendencies were decidedly High Church, he had no intense craving for the highest and most ornamental

developments of Ritualism, but when they were put before him, he accepted them for what they were worth, just as a man who prefers a plain roast, or grill, will, upon occasion, eat an elaborate French dinner without grumbling. For Dissent he had a certain supercilious respect, but the Low Church party he held in great contempt, looking upon them as decidedly heretical, and applying to them the words of Hudibras:

> "Such as breed out of peccant humours
> Of our own Church, like wens, or tumours,
> And like a maggot in a sore,
> Would that which gave it life devour."

It certainly never occurred to him that a thoroughly impartial person might consider the lines to be about as applicable to one party as to the other.

There was not a church within about four miles of Sturton Wood, except that of West Compting, a small village about a mile and a-half from the Earl's seat.

The inhabitants of four villages found church accommodation at West Compting, where the service might be characterised as of the old and mild school—in fact, it had not altered within the memory of living man; no change had ever been made in the four instruments which served in lieu of an organ, and the same four ladies and three gentlemen, who from vanity or love of being useful, or perhaps a little of both, had continued to perch themselves in the front of the small gallery for the purpose of leading the voices of their brethren, for more years than they liked to reckon. It had never even

entered into the head of anyone in the parish to call in the aid of boys in surplices—such a proceeding would have been looked upon as almost tantamount to a declaration of Romanism. Ever since the Earl had been of sufficient age, the picturesque old ivy-covered church nestling among the trees half way up the steep hill leading out of West Compting, saw him regularly every Sunday whenever he happened to be at Stourton Wood; but after the very highly-spiced entertainment at St. Neuterom, the dull insipidity of the West Compting service depressed him sadly.

It was therefore not surprising that on hearing of the service held in the little chapel attached to the monastery of St. Joseph, at Clumpton Abbots, he should desire to experiment as to

whether it would suit his taste better than that of West Compting. The experiment proved so satisfactory that he transferred his allegiance to Clumpton Abbots without reserve, much to the disgust of the faithful at West Compting, who were almost unanimous in the opinion that the Earl would go to Rome before the year was out and kiss the Pope's stocking, as young Lord Kewt had done. Those who knew him better, opined that he was not such a fool as he looked, not that they thought he looked more like a fool than the rest of their acquaintances, but that they considered him to be about the last man in the world to make himself conspicuous by taking a step of which he could enjoy nearly all the advantages, while remaining in *statu quo*.

The character of the Countess Trampleasure might be described as unexceptionable, but not marked, for with the exception of her peculiar behaviour at the time of Lady Katherine's birth, she had never been known to exhibit any strength of will. Sprung from a very old but not over rich country family, she had married the Earl in obedience to her father, Sir Walter Clumpton, Baronet, of Clumpton, although by so doing she caused young Will Litton—the son of a rich tenant-farmer in the neighbourhood—to go to Australia and to be no more heard of.

The Countess Trampleasure's manners were so aristocratically languid, that it was thought she would not be likely to have energy enough to reproduce herself. Two years elapsed, and then

during the Earl's absence on his yachting trip, she bore him a daughter, to his great surprise, for he had not even been aware of the probability of such an event! the daughter was now eighteen, brotherless and sisterless. The failure of male issue naturally caused the Earl some uneasiness, but not being a man of strong passions, and being of a somewhat stoical—or as some people said, indifferent—disposition, it consoled him to think that the want of an heir could not deprive him of his estates at Stourton Wood, and in Shropshire, during his lifetime, and after his death he did not in the least grudge them to his brother Tom's son. Perhaps because he was at this time a comparatively young man he could talk of death with great equanimity; he sometimes used to say to

his brother "it's not death but dying, that's so troublesome."

Tom was of a quite different temperament; he had no wish to see his brother dead, but he was glad to believe that his son would most likely inherit the land, and he thought how soured he would have felt had he been in his brother's position.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUNTESS'S MAID.

How some have yearned for and implored success!
In letters, love, or war, and having won
The dearest object of their souls' desire,
Wished they had something left to win;
Have felt the lack of long-accustomed strife,
And doubted whether they were better blest
In fervent longing for the thing they craved,
Or in the holding.

Ruth Ruthven had been called Countess Trampleasure's lady's-maid till she became a married woman. The Countess, while staying in town soon after her honeymoon, came in contact with Ruth

Ruthven, spinster, who was then a "member" of the church of St. Neuterom, Mayfair, known as "Sister Ruth." wearing the black uniform, but of stuff rather inferior to that sported by the *élite*. Her father was only a small milk-dealer, who carried out his own cans, principally because he knew that if the contents should meet with any further attenuation on their rounds, the mixture would be too thin to pass muster even as London milk.

Of about the same age as the Countess, Ruth was a tall, finely-proportioned young woman, with a face of deadly paleness, thin slightly-aquiline nose, lustreless grey-blue eyes, thin lips, so firmly compressed that she might fairly lay claim to be credited with great firmness of purpose.

A character so essentially differing from her own perhaps, proved specially attractive to the Countess. Rose went to Stourton Wood as lady's-maid, where her plainly-made black stuff dress, and grave, reticent manners, caused her to be anything but a favourite in the servants' hall; even Mrs Podblow, the stout housekeeper, with her stately manners and her watered silk dresses, could not prevail against her. The old butler, who was held to be privileged to chuck under the chin all the female servants, had to keep his distance with Ruth; she seemed to rise superior to all of them without an effort, and they naturally hated her.

She had held her situation little more than a year when she left, to marry a gentleman of German extraction named

Sweiper, a singer at some of the minor London music halls. Having been brought up in England he could speak English much better than German. His parents were Hebrews, but the youthful Sweiper grew up in no particular "persuasion," except the expediency of extracting from life as much pleasure as possible, and, luckily for him, his features were such that he might be mistaken for a Gentile. Constant attendance at some of the East End music-halls made him aspire to perform on the tobacco-smoke-begirt stage, and at the early age of eighteen he had achieved this grand summit of his ambition. Encouraged by Ruth's father, he had marked her for his own before she left London.

Her mistress, actuated by a combina-

tion of selfish and unselfish motives, strongly advised her against the match, with the total absence of result usual in such cases.

When Mrs Sweiper was about to become a mother, the attractions of another lady proved too strong for her free-loving husband, and he left the country suddenly, taking the other lady with him. They were both of the same profession, and it might have been expected that their partnership would prove prosperous, so it doubtless would but for the roving eye of Mr. Sweiper. After a paying tour through the United States, they visited San Francisco; here Mr Sweiper became enamoured of a handsome quadroon, whose susceptibilies were deeply moved by his melodious warbling.

On discovering this reciprocity, Mr

Sweiper's professional partner fiercely resented it. Finding him in the apartments of the quadroon lady, the slighted one struck the singer on the head with a three-legged stool, he retaliated with a heavy blow of his fist. She then took up a carving-knife which lay on the table, and dealt Mr Sweiper such a vigorous thrust in the neighbourhood of his false heart, that in less than a quarter of an hour he was apparently at his last gasp. The two ladies—having taken a last fond look at the too susceptible singer—departed rather hurriedly by the next steamer, the operator with the carving-knife being in wholesome fear of the lawful blood avengers, the quadroon lady mistrusting their discrimination.

Under the title of "Jealousy and

Revenge," the occurrence formed a taking paragraph in the San-Francisco papers, which some of their English contemporaries copied. One Sunday morning three of Ruth Sweiper's female acquaintances saw the account, and rushed off to her lodgings, newspaper in hand, naturally anxious to observe the effect it would produce. Arriving all at the same minute, they were informed that she had returned to her old situation at Stourton Wood. Her friends had seen the paragraph in a weekly paper; Ruth had seen it in a "daily" on the previous Monday. Her grief was not nearly so deep as her mourning.

The servants at Stourton Wood disliked her more than ever. She had acquired the dignity of widowhood without looking a day older—an unpar-

donable offence in the eyes of the women. The men liked her none the better, for she kept them still at a distance. Mrs Podblow was simply disgusted with the Countess, when she not only refused to see a doctor at the most critical period of her life, but persisted in having "that slut of a girl" to attend on her as soon as she arrived, instead of calling in some matron of experience, like Mrs Podblow herself, for instance, "why, people might say all sorts of things;" as a matter of fact, they did make a great variety of remarks, especially wondering "what the Earl would say on his return?"

The Earl was a man who—although not exactly satisfied—never expressed himself at great length on any point which gave him dissatisfaction; he had

acquired the virtue of accepting the inevitable with tolerable grace and resignation, moreover he knew the Countess was always unable to bear chiding or questioning with amiability; so when he returned and saw his week-old daughter, he said very little that was not of a complimentary nature.

The child grew up much more in the society of Ruth than in that of the Countess, who had always expressed dislike to children, and unwillingness to have any of her own; it was therefore thought by several people in the neighbourhood that she had shown considerable condescension in giving birth even to a daughter.

The more Ruth's affection grew for little Kate the more antagonism there seemed to be between Ruth and the

Countess, who appeared to have as little liking for her daughter as she gradually came to have for her attendant.

A *dévote*, partly by nature and partly by cultivation, Ruth imbued her young charge with all those gentle superstitions in which religious women so much delight.

Before the erection of the monastery at Clumpton Abbots, once a week regularly Ruth used to confess at the High Church on the outskirts of Burchester, and when her little charge attained a sufficient age she was taught to do likewise.

On the advent of Mr. Sparman's predecessor, Ruth followed the example of her noble master, and attended the little church at Clumpton Abbots.

The news of her unloved husband's

death conjured up the remembrance of her boy lover; at the thought of him her whole nature seemed to soften, and the rarely-seen smile lit up her pale face with an uncommon beauty.

During the time that she was Sister Ruth at St. Neuterom's, George Torr had been a chorister—a tall, lathy youth of eighteen, with short nut-brown wavy hair, and a face as cleanly cut as those of the ideal athletes that the Greek sculptors used to chisel.

Apprenticed to one of those monumental masons who regularly circularise the bereaved people who make known their losses in the death department of the daily papers, young Torr aspired to high art, working at his occupation *con amore*, and devoting nearly all his spare time to improving his drawing

from life and from the antique. He was three years younger than Ruth, and worshipped her with that adoration which is so often evinced by an earnest youth under twenty for a handsome woman two or three years his senior. As to the possibility of his ever marrying her, it hardly occurred to her, he was too young and unformed in character to think of marriage as applicable to himself. Ruth, on the contrary, thought more of a settlement and a home. With women this idea is naturally equivalent to the masculine aspirations after a profitable means of livelihood.

Had Ruth's home been a happy one, she would have willingly waited years for her beautiful young lover. Favoured woman is fortunately exempt from *delirium tremens*. Ruth's mother not only

drank to an extent which would have produced that humiliating disorder in a man, but she hated her daughter, whose correct behaviour made her own appear worse by contrast. Ruth's father, too, was not altogether proof against the allurements offered by the splendidly-decorated gin-palaces which he passed in his rounds, or it should rather be said he failed to pass them without inspecting their florid interiors. In addition to these unpleasantnesses, Mr. Ruthven was continually presenting his particular friend, Mr. Sweiper, to his daughter's favourable notice. It was therefore not surprising that she should fancy a home of her own would be preferable to the paternal roof. True, she was not in love with the proffered husband, but woman seldom are. Mar-

riage, however, would give an accession of dignity; she would be her own mistress, and her mother would no more have dominion over her. George Torr was young; it might be years before he would have a home to offer her, he had never made any definite proposal, and when he had the power to do so he might not have the will; so she had married Mr Sweiper, and had repented, not exactly in sackcloth and ashes, but in bitterness of spirit, at being looked upon with pity as a deserted wife obliged to support herself by that treadmill-like exercise, the sewing-machine.

When the Earl and Countess came to town for the first time after the unexpected increase in their family, what more natural than that she should go to evening service at St. Neuterom's?

She arrived soon after the doors were opened, and seated herself on one of the back benches.

George Torr, walking round the church before service, in the apparently purposeless way peculiar to choristers, looking preternaturally tall in his long black cassock, cannot fail to see the beautiful pale face of Ruth, thrown into strong relief by her plain black attire. He came over to where she sat, her cheeks were slightly tinged with colour, owing to her brisk walk from Eaton Square, and as he bent over her to say, "How d'ye do?—what a long time since I saw you!" he thought he had never seen a woman look so lovely.

Maintaining his strictly ecclesiastical demeanour, he merely added, "I shall see you after the service," in a way

which would have led a bystander to think that he had been inquiring whether she wanted a hymn-book. Nevertheless, it is to be feared that for the next hour or so all his aspirations went out to a female deity.

Service ended, he showed little disposition to loiter about in the church after his usual manner, dreaming over a stained-glass window or some fine piece of wood-carving. He arrived at the doors almost as soon as Ruth. She told him of her husband's death, which in some way or other he knew of before. To him she was the same Ruth as when he last saw her; for him she would never alter, her marriage and widowhood were circumstances no more interfering with his feelings towards her than an attack of measles or scarlatina. He

mourned her resignedly as a lost treasure when Sweiper took her away ; but now she was free, and his increased age and better position gave him more right to try and secure her.

It did not require a woman with Ruth Ruthven's discrimination to come to the conclusion that she might become Mrs George Torr as soon as Mr George Torr could could provide a decent home. He told her of his aspirations after high art ; how he had modelled everything in the house of his landlady, from her cat to her daughter—which latter individual he had been obliged to idealise considerably on account of her extreme ugliness. He told her of his great expectations as to the success of the composition he was then engaged on, and which occupied every spare moment,

viz., a small marble statue of Achilles dragging the body of Hector at his chariot wheels—not a comic Achilles, like the one in Hyde Park, made up of a large man's legs and a small man's arms—but a really symmetrical Achilles, all fire and muscle.

The monumental business he hated, but it had been a means to an end; even now he held several commissions for busts, given by people who had seen his landlady's daughter and her image in *terra cotta*. Doubtless they were of opinion that their features would bear idealising.

Eaton Square was reached too soon; they were revelling in the rapture of first love. Of course they met whenever they could manage to do so, and corresponded regularly. In the course of a

few interviews it was arranged that they should marry before they were a year older.

Eight months had barely elapsed, the Earl's family are again in town. Ruth and George are again walking from St. Neuterom's towards Eaton Square. It is a cold November evening, and a drizzling rain is falling, almost a sufficient reason for their fixed, grave looks. Ruth has made a communication to her lover which pains him inexpressibly.

"Can't you set it right even now?" he asked after a long pause, looking straight before him.

"Impossible," replied Ruth, with mournful firmness.

"Yes, I suppose it is impossible," said George, meditatively. "Ruth, you know how I love you, and yet I couldn't

bear to marry you under such circumstances. We should neither of us be happy; there would always be something between us. We are both young, I would wait any length of time for you. At any moment something might occur which would put an end to the present painful state of things."

"I feel that you're right," said Ruth, in a low voice; "we can wait for each other as you say, but——"

"But what?" said George, quickly, fearing she was about to say that she could not bind herself to wait.

"Well," continued Ruth, hesitatingly, "it seems so very unjust that you should waste the best years of your life on account of a sin in which you had no hand."

"Don't talk like that, Ruth, you'll

never hear any complaints from me, I shall never even think them."

He kissed her—for the first time—and they parted, to wait and wait, for how many years neither knew,—George to work almost unintermittingly at his exacting art, Ruth to dream away her dull hours as a dependent in a nobleman's family.

CHAPTER X.

LADY KATHERINE.

A soul so pure, and spotless, that her sins
Would seem like virtues in the grosser sort
Of mortals, who but eat, and drink, and sleep,
In one long round of greed and luxury.

At the age of eighteen, Lady Katherine Trampleasure, the Earl's only child, possessed a style of beauty by no means calculated to catch the fancy of every man. There was nothing arch or vivacious about her, and she had but little sense of humour.

Rarely fair—many people said in-

sipidly so—she looked like a saint or an angel from one of Raphael's pictures; but as very ordinary women sat for the painter's models, receiving only such idealisation of treatment as he was capable of giving, this description is not worth much; "make-up" — to use a stagey expression—has a great deal to do with appearance, angelic or otherwise, and it is perhaps not ill-natured to say that if the Lady Katherine had been doomed to wear a common print dress, costing not more than half-a-crown for making, and a mob-cap, she would have looked considerably less saint-like.

Dress is a wonderful transformer. Even a monkey in female attire will look so exactly like some women, that men who can only see the resemblance of their own sex to the apes, would be astonished

at the sight, simply because it has not occurred to them how much like woman is to man.

Lady Katherine always dressed in the best and softest materials, made in the simplest possible manner. She had a quite fanatical hatred for dresses overloaded with trimmings, and flowers, and balloon panniers, which give the back view of a lady an appearance almost as grotesque and suggestive as the costumes of the celebrated Clodoche troupe.

Looking upon bonnets as utterly absurd and useless, in the open air she always wore a hat—not any one of the various sorts which rest on the bridge of the nose, or serve solely as a protection to the back hair, but a sensible felt or straw, with a brim sufficiently wide to shade her eyes from the light.

What with her dress, and her serenely beautiful face, with its features too harmonious and faultless to captivate the senses of ordinary males, she certainly looked more saint-like and angelic than most women. The style of her beautiful silky hair she seldom altered, the short firm plaits were all her own, without any addition of jute or horsehair; in fine, a glance at this pure, ethereal-looking girl of eighteen, made it easy to doubt that her remote ancestors could have ever been anything like what the chimpanzee now is, or else to very forcibly suggest the countless ages which such a development must have occupied. With the generality of men and women it is easy to trace the monkey in every look and gesture, with the Lady Katherine this similarity was

reduced to a minimum. A *dévoíe* by nature and by education she would have liked nothing so well as to enter a convent, but the Earl put a most decided veto on such a step, and she did not possess sufficient strength of will to disobey.

When Mr. Sparman commenced his ministry at St. Joseph's, she resumed the attendances which she had commenced under his predecessor. The dry old services at West Compting Church were as distasteful to her as to her father—perhaps more so, for devotional feeling is nearly always much stronger in woman, and a shabby, dull, dead-alive service, without even an attempt at beauty, either in music, in decorations, or in ceremonial, seemed like an insult to her Deity.

Statistics showing the relative number

of males and females who confess to their spiritual advisers would be decidedly instructive, and might have some bearing on the rival claims of the two sexes to intellectual superiority.

Mr. Sparman, like all thorough-going priests, was a warm advocate of the Confessional, as any one having the interest of his order really at heart always must be. Women rule the men; priests—if they can only manage to maintain their influence over women—will to a great extent rule the world. The clergy are not more peculiar in their desire to cling to power than any other class, they may say of progress fighting against them, "so much the worse for progress," in some respects they are perhaps right, but it is to be feared that progress will not be denied.

It certainly seemed rather absurd for Lady Katherine to take up her position at Mr Sparman's ear for the purpose of pouring into it a tale of trifling peccadilloes which a woman of different temperament would have never even recorded in her memory, especially as he had no plenary absolution to offer; but as she took little pleasure in the frivolities which usually employ the time of young ladies in her station, how else could she occupy herself? Part of woman's mission hitherto has been to perpetuate religion; but for her wonderful faith and credulity where would it have been?

CHAPTER XI.

A CHAMPION.

Confession acts on sympathetic souls
Like summer rain on earth after a drought,
And stirs the very core of both the actors.
The danger lies in licensing the priests
Like paid pantechnicons of confidences
Which bestial natures may perchance abuse.

THANKS to Ruth's early training, Lady Katherine confessed at least once a week, always to Mr Sparman, although there was no cogent reason why she should not have confessed to some of the unordained monks, or in fact, to her own maid in default of any more convenient

confidant; the exercise being only intended as an easing and comforting of the mind, and not as a sacrament.

Wilfrid Brinkhurst had been at the monastery four or five days; and with that peculiar adaptability which is noticeable in so many of us, he already experienced the feeling of having been there several years. Mr Sparman had been summoned to the bedside of a dying woman at a village some four miles distant, when the Lady Katherine came to confess, and Wilfrid answered the bell.

"Is Father Sparman in?" she asked.

"No, he's visiting a sick woman," replied Wilfrid.

"Oh!" I came to——to confess," said Lady Katherine, looking on the ground.

"If that is all, sister, perhaps I can act as his substitute," said Wilfrid, with

downcast eyes, in a perfectly impassive and machine-like manner that would have done credit to any monk either ancient or modern.

Lady Katherine made no answer, but as Wilfrid—or Brother Francis, to give him his newly-acquired name—could see that she assented, he slowly led the way to the chapel, and took his seat in the chair with the air of one who performed the business every day.

Lady Katherine knelt down, and putting her delicately-chiselled lips to the aperture, without a thought of the many dirty mouths which might have been there before, she slowly poured forth a tale of offences so light that, if honestly given, they sufficiently attested the beautiful penitent's purity.

Instead of being little slips of vanity,

frivolity, envy, ill-nature, uncharitableness, and the like, they consisted of such faults as might have been committed by a disembodied spirit, if that essentially impossible entity could be imagined weak-minded enough to make a clean breast of his inner life.

Wilfrid was deeply affected, tears came into his eyes, and he had to bite his lips firmly to prevent his emotion being heard. Here was a woman kneeling before him whose existence he had hardly thought possible—so pure, so benevolent, of such almost unearthly goodness, calling to his mind the female saints he had read of, who throwing aside all worldly riches, had devoted themselves solely to good works and to the service of God.

Of an age not too advanced for ex-

periencing a pure unsensual affection, Wilfrid regarded Lady Katherine with such feelings as those which the holy men and women among the early Christians are supposed to have felt for each other. Although it seems only rational to fancy that—unless the women were very ugly—however great a reputation for holiness the men might have possessed, they were troubled with much the same sort of sensations towards their lady coadjutors as is evinced by the clergy of the present day.

Lady Katherine rose from her knees, and Wilfrid said in the constrained manner that had become natural to him:

"Sister, your sins are such as may easily be forgiven; should you continue in your present ways I think you

are likely by the grace of Our Lord to enter into Heaven."

Lady Katherine merely bowed her head, and dropped her veil; not a little bit of spotted net, just reaching to her chin, but a really substantial fabric, falling nearly to her waist. She saw nothing incongruous in the situation; for Wilfrid, instead of having the appearance of the mere boy that he was, looked more like a young man of five and twenty, rather fine drawn in the face, from severe training for some athletic contest.

Lady Katherine walked slowly out of the chapel, followed by Wilfrid in a rapt reverie; rousing himself when they came to the oaken, nail-studded door in the wall which led to the outer world, he turned the key, and Lady

Katherine, making him a slight bow, went out.

He sauntered slowly back towards the house, and walked into the refectory, a large room about sixty feet long by twenty feet wide, having somewhat the appearance of a chapel without its furniture. In the centre of the room stood four narrow deal tables, placed end to end, with forms on each side of them.

All the twenty-five monks were here assembled, standing about in little groups or lounging on the forms—laughing, talking, reading, drawing, and writing.

They had a perfect right to be in the refectory at this particular time, but Mr Sparman's presence would certainly have ensured considerably less noise. A very mild-looking youth, who went by the name of Brother Eusebius, had been

appointed deputy chief, but he seemed quite incapable of exercising any authority. Evidently while the cat was away the mice would play, no less in a monastery than in an ordinary school; the monks differed hardly at all from any twenty-five other young men left to themselves with but little to do. In the rough outlines of their nature the duke bears an exact resemblance to the dustman, and a young monk is at heart not unlike any other boy.

The noisiest of the crew was the youth to whom Mr Sparman had alluded as possessing almost too much life. He went by the name of Brother Lawrence; and as Wilfrid walked leisurely in, this irrepressible monk shouted out:

"Hulloa! here's Saint Willie—or Saint Francis—I beg his saintship's pardon."

Taking no notice of the jester, Wilfrid seated himself at the end of the table nearest the door, and opened a book which lay near him. Brother Lawrence glanced towards Wilfrid, and winking his eye at a youth called Brother John, who was resting his head on his elbow stretched more than half across the table, he bawled out:

"I say, Brother Francis, you didn't keep that numming girl all to yourself, did you? I say, Jack, isn't he artful?"

"No fear," replied Brother John, "he knows his little way about."

"I saw you, Willie," continued Brother Lawrence, laughing heartily. "Isn't it nice to have a pretty girl whispering into your ear?"

Wilfrid's blood boiled, but he curbed his tongue, and pretended to read his book.

"I'll tell you what it is, Willie, my boy," said Brother Lawrence, apparently in one of his most boisterous humours, "you shan't have her next time; I shall cut in and try my luck. Don't imagine you're going to have it all your own way."

Wilfrid felt as much hurt at the words as though he had seen a sacrilege committed, but having a perfect contempt for Brother Lawrence, he remained silent. Coming down the room Brother Lawrence took up his position on the form beside his victim.

"Did she give you a kiss, Willie, boy?" he said, mockingly putting his face close to the other's.

"I didn't ask for your society," said Wilfrid, turning away, and restraining an intense desire to strike Brother Lawrence.

"Never mind, Willie. I like you, Willie. Didn't she admire the pretty curl of your hair—eh, Willie?" said Brother Lawrence taking up a lock of Wilfrid's hair and giving it a slight pull.

An isolated act of this kind would have gone almost unnoticed, but coming after the insults passed on a being who to Wilfrid's youthful imagination seemed near akin to an angel, it proved a provocation too strong for his usually creditable stock of self-control; he struck his tormentor a severe back-handed blow across the face, and jumped up from the form, ready for what might follow.

Brother Lawrence was by no means slow to take action; he started up furious, his face crimson with passion and from the effects of the back-hander. Aiming a fierce blow at Wilfrid, he said,

hoarse with rage, "I'll teach you to strike your betters, you young sneak."

Wilfrid easily dodged the blow, and all the monks, quickly understanding that an *ultimatum* had been issued, and that diplomacy must of necessity be powerless to prevent a battle, gathered round the combatants, talking, laughing, and pushing with that keen enjoyment of a hand-to-hand fight, which has always characterised people of immature age, or imperfect culture, all over the globe, whether—as in the more barbarous times of the Roman gladiatorial contests—the result was to be death, or, as in our own refined times of prize-fights, the worst that generally befalls is a severe bruising.

Brother Lawrence was the son of a rich mill-owner in the neighbourhood, a

large, clumsily made youth of nearly twenty, almost a head taller than Wilfrid, who remembering that he had only boxed a few times with a young friend of his at Fritham, curbed his fierce desire for immediate vengeance, determining to wait his opportunity, and then to put out all his strength when his opponent should be tired with hitting.

Brother Lawrence rushed at him like a bull at a picador, making furious hits which Wilfrid, by dint of quick eye and cool temper, either stopped or avoided.

Brother Eusebius, suddenly waking up to the trust which had been reposed in him, rushed in between the combatants, and received a severe punch on the nose from Brother Lawrence, which caused the stricken one to cover his

wounded organ with both hands, and retire to a side bench, where, while staunching the blood, he no doubt thought and cursed, much as poor Mercutio does when run through the gizzard in a quarrel which does not personally concern him.

"Oh! don't separate them," said two or three in chorus; "they can't hurt each other."

"Never mind, Sebius! old fellow, put a key down your back," said another, handing him a bunch.

Meanwhile Brother Lawrence lashed out fast and furiously, occasionally with effect, and then Wilfrid, losing his self-control, rushed in and inflicted a blow or two, receiving heavy punishment in return; for when Brother Lawrence did manage to make a hit, it was both

heard and felt, but his rapid movements were already beginning to tell on his wind. On seeing this Wilfrid stepped in and did some execution at rather closer quarters, at the same time his right eye came into violent collision with Brother Lawrence's knuckles, caus ing a scintillation of colours which he knew to be prophetic of the beautiful variety of tints which would appear round the injured part on the morrow. This casualty served only to steady him; he was getting very tired, but remembering—what has so often turned the tide of athletic contests—that his opponent must be quite as exhausted, he began to fight with more coolness and resolution, taking a mental vow that so long as he could lift a finger he would not give in.

The scene would have been a fine study for one of those old masters who between them, seem to have left hardly anything unpainted. Wilfrid's pale, thin face, with its look of quiet but fierce determination, strongly contrasting with Brother Lawrence's florid, discoloured countenance, inflamed and distorted with ungovernable passion. The other monks, some standing closely round the central figures, laughing, and keenly enjoying the sight; others a little further off, so intensely interested that they are unable to keep their eyes off the combatants, but evincing a feeling of shame and uneasiness that such a scandal should take place, and occasionally glancing towards the door, as if with a presentiment that Father Sparman's tall, gaunt figure would suddenly appear,

and, with one horrified look, make them all wish that they could sink into the earth. Further away still, towards the bottom of the room, a little knot of three or four, whispering together, with their backs turned on the disgraceful sight, the oak fittings of the room with its bare whitewashed walls forming a background strikingly in contrast with the monks' black frocks, the whole formed a scene of which an old master hard up for a subject might have been glad, only it was of course improbable that he should be able to imagine the bare possibility of such a battle. A modern artist might perhaps go further and fare worse for a composition; but the utter incompatibility of painting anything from play or romance, which has not undergone the improving

influence of age, is fatal to such a suggestion.

Brother Lawrence's forces were evidently demoralised, his blows were less often effective, while Wilfrid managed to reach his antagonist's face two or three times with stunning effect. The spectators did not take long to see which way victory inclined; they of course wished the little one to win, some of them encouraging him by shouts of "Bravo, St. Bill!" "Well hit, St. Francis!" which only served to make Brother Lawrence's movements more wild. He plunged about like a stricken fish, striking here, there, and everywhere, without method or caution; it was evident that only a rapid and resolute movement of the enemy's reserves was necessary to secure him a complete victory.

Wilfrid saw this, and regardless of a few random blows he rushed in and made the fighting at close quarters. Three heavy blows full on the face in quick succession, sent Brother Lawrence staggering among the spectators on to a form, his momentum knocked it down, and he fell prostrate on it.

Two or three monks picked him up, and he made a movement as if to renew the combat, but they dissuaded him from doing so without much difficulty. At that moment the door opened, and Mr Sparman stood, for a moment or two motionless in the doorway, with the door-handle in his hand.

CHAPTER XII.

WOE TO THE CONQUEROR.

It seems impossible for puny man—
Whose passions now are like the other beasts—
To lose the wish to strike his enemy.
If he but last a time just twice a long
As it has taken to develope him,
Will he arrive at such a great perfection
As will enable him to rule himself?

Even before Mr Sparman opened the door, after the first flush of victory, Wilfrid had time to feel intensely humiliated, and ashamed of himself for having given way to such savage conduct. He felt that, instead of having

followed the extremely difficult injunction which his Divine Master laid down for the guidance of buffeted ones, he had acted like the barbarous costermonger or aboriginal. When his friend and preceptor appeared, his prostration became complete; utterly limp and abashed, he stood with downcast eyes, looking rather like a defeated than a victorious pugilist. Mr. Sparman took in the situation at a glance; he knew, without asking, who had been the aggressor, but walking up to the now slinking group of monks who were wiping Brother Lawrence's bleeding face, he said in a severe tone, "And, pray, what's the meaning of all this?" The monks looked sheepish, there was a dead silence for a moment or two, and then Wilfrid said in a low, constrained tone, as though

the words were being dragged out of him, "We've been fighting; I struck the first blow."

"This is a sad downfall for brothers who ought to dwell together in unity," said Mr. Sparman gravely. "Brother Francis, you had better go to your cell, and ask forgiveness for having given way to your evil passions; fasting and prayer may do much for you."

Wilfrid walked out slowly and sadly, without raising his eyes from the ground. "Brother Lawrence," continued Mr Sparman, "you had better go and wash yourself." The other monks—with the exception of those who had stood quite aloof from the fight—slunk about uneasily. Some took their seats at the tables, simulating an intense interest in reading or writing, others walked about

noiselessly in twos and threes, with the most cenobitic air they could assume on so short a notice.

Looking round on the assemblage, after a short pause, Mr Sparman said, with severe sarcasm, "It seems strange that twenty should not have been able to control two! Was there no one with sufficient proper feeling to make the attempt? 'Where's Brother Eusebius?"

"I tried to separate them," said Brother Eusebius, who had been sitting on the same side of the room as the door, still staunching his wound. "I went in between them and got a dreadful punch on the nose." As he spoke he withdrew his stained handkerchief, disclosing a proboscis nearly twice its normal size, his hair was of a bright red colour, worn rather long, and the

tonsure not having been performed in a masterly style, he presented such a comical appearance, that even Mr Sparman found it very difficult to restrain a smile, and some of the monks could hardly stifle their laughter.

"I'm sorry you were hurt, Brother Eusebius," said Mr Sparman; and then looking round at the rest as he went out, he added with a frown, "If you had been seconded in your endeavours, we should have been spared this great disgrace."

On leaving the refectory Wilfrid went straight to his cell, threw himself on his knees at the little table before the crucifix, and sobbed as though his heart would burst.

When Mr Sparman came up and found him in this position, his passion-

ate outbursts had somewhat subsided. He knelt motionless, rather in dreamy self-communion than in prayer, giving vent occasionally to a dull spasm of grief.

"Rise up, my boy," said Mr Sparman, gently. "I'm not angry with you now;" and putting his hands under the penitent's arm-pits, he assisted him to stand up.

"What must you think of me?" said Wilfred, sadly, stretching himself, and putting both hands on his forehead.

"Think of you?" replied Mr Sparman, smiling reassuringly, and seating himself on the edge of the attenuated truckle-bed, "Why I think that you've done as most other boys of your age would have done."

Wilfrid sank down on the one rush-

bottomed chair, and said dejectedly, "Yes, but I ought not to have done so," and then he added bitterly, "Is it impossible to stifle this animal nature of ours, which so often asserts its power and thwarts our highest aims?"

"Hitherto, it certainly has seemed impossible entirely to overcome it," said Mr Sparman, absently untying and tying his girdle, "but each generation is an improvement on the preceding one"—there's no knowing what we may arrive at. In this life, however, I think there's no doubt we shall always retain our animal nature; the great object should be to keep it under proper control; besides, you see, if we were angelic creatures, free from brute desires, there would be no merit in virtue. Can you imagine anything more painfully tedious

than a life in which everyone's behaviour should be of the very best quality without any exertion on his part? It would be worse than being able to keep in perfect health without taking exercise."

"But in heaven we shall be all perfect without striving after perfection."

"No, I should say not; I can't conceive a state of perfect passiveness. We shall have fewer temptations."

"None at all, I should have thought," said Wilfrid.

"Oh, yes! some," rejoined Mr Spurman, musingly. "Can you imagine the souls of some men as otherwise than little, or envious, or malicious? What a beautiful exercise in virtue it would be to bear with such people!"

"You seem to think that we're placed

on the earth solely as a probation for heaven, and that we're not completely at rest even there," said Wilfrid, moodily.

"Oh, yes! decidedly at rest as compared with this life."

"It seems almost unjust that an omnipotent being should place us here without any option on our part. Surely if heaven is so pleasant, it would have been kinder to have planted us there from the beginning, without troubling us with existence on this uncomfortable globe."

Mr Sparman smiled cheerily, as he said:

"Ah! my dear boy, you see you're not in possession of all the circumstances."

"Well, it's a very dismal world. I

don't see why anyone should wish to remain in it," said Wilfrid, covering his face with his hands as if to shut out an unpleasant sight.

"I think it depends mainly on ourselves," said Mr Sparman. "Sometimes life seems to us intensely enjoyable, and sometimes quite the reverse; but even then the methods of escaping from it are all so unpleasant that most people prefer to rub along in their old grooves; besides," continued the priest, suddenly seeming to remember his *rôle*, "'to shuffle off this mortal coil,' or even to entertain the thought of such a thing, is extremely sinful, it's rejecting the free gift of an allwise Creator; moreover, it's very cowardly to turn tail, and run away from anything that you've once accepted the task of fighting."

"But I didn't accept the task of fighting it — I had no option in the matter," said Wilfrid uncovering his face for a moment.

Mr Sparman's eyes lit up with the half smile they usually wore when he felt confident of adding to his score against an adversary, as he said judicially:

"I'm afraid that even if the point were reserved, the court would decide against you; not having repudiated the contract as soon as you became sufficiently conscious to do so, and having acted under it all these years, you must be held to have accepted it."

"Oh, yes! of course," said Wilfrid, rousing himself. "I've no wish—not even the thought—of repudiating it; I only meant to convey that existence is nothing

to brag about, and that if everyone could have his whole life set before him, and could choose before entering on it, whether 'to be or not to be,' the world would be very thinly inhabited."

"Not if the glorious apotheosis could be also shown?"

"Perhaps not," said Wilfrid, with special emphasis; "but we can't form any opinion on that point, because we haven't the ghost of an idea what the 'glorious apotheosis' will be like. I only hope that it will be as glorious as we are led to believe; why shouldn't it?"

"Ah! why shouldn't it?" said Mr Sparman; "but what did you fight about?"

Wilfrid narrated rather shamefacedly all that had occurred up to the first blow.

"You certainly could not have found a more angelic lady to fight about than Lady Trampleasure. I never yet met her equal; she seems like a being from another world. There's none of that religious conceit about her which one so often meets with, especially in people of exalted station; she seems to do good simply for its own sake. I firmly believe that if she had no hope of heaven or fear of hell, she would act just as she does now. She visits the poor and sick, often taking them broth and dainty dishes made by herself; not in the usual amateurish way, or with a kind of flourish which seems to say, 'It's very good of me to dance attendance on the poor, unsavoury people, but I look for my reward hereafter; and of course it's not done with a lurking

idea of being brought in conveniently close contact with some eligible curate or incumbent. No, it seems done out of pure pity, sympathy, and love; pity for their poverty and misfortunes, sympathy with them in their griefs and trials, and love for them as fellow-creatures less blessed in outward circumstances than herself, through no want of merit on their part."

Mr Sparman had worked himself almost into enthusiasm, and Wilfrid glanced at him almost expecting to detect some blush or sign denoting something warmer than a mere admiration of good qualities, but he saw nothing inconsistent with the purest veneration for an incarnation of virtue.

"Doesn't she often get taken in?" he asked.

"Of course she does, and she knows it, but she acts on the principle that it's better to benefit fifty impostors than that one poor unfortunate should be pinched with cold and hunger, and it's hard to say that she's not right. Granted that some family receives her bounty, who by dint of a little more energy, or thrift, or industry, might have managed to exist without help; still they must have arrived at a very unenviable position before they would be willing to accept charity. Of course they may acquire idle habits, and in that case it isn't abstract justice they should be maintained without any exertion on their part; but after all, it doesn't follow that if they went short some one more deserving would reap the benefit. It's something like the

income tax; people don't so much object to its heaviness as to the fact that their next door neighbour doesn't pay on his real income by several hundreds, quite forgetting that they would not reap any direct benefit however fairly he might pay."

"Yes, that's like my father," said Wilfrid, "he doesn't pay on a quarter of his income, and he makes a point of never giving money to beggars. If they ask, he says they're impostors, and if they don't ask he says they don't want."

"That's a very safe method!" laughed Mr Sparman.

Although it would perhaps be hardly correct to say that the news of Lady Katherine's rank intensified the impression produced on Wilfrid by her beauty and devoutness, the man has not yet

been born whom a jury would acquit of being in some way influenced by the wealth and station of those he happens to meet; even the words and emphasis of railway officials, when they put their heads in at the carriage window and ask for tickets, varies according to the class of the compartment. Titled individuals are more run after by American citizens than by their compatriots, perhaps on the principle that no man is a prophet in his own country, where a too careful record is kept of his false prophecies. It would of course be very absurd for a brand new place like America to institute such titles as obtain in these isles, because the ennobled ones and their descendants would have to undergo such a long period of probationary ridicule, before their new name-

handles could possibly mellow into anything like respectability; but new republicans are not altogether unreasonable in lionising princes and dukes, for old-world titles at least denote that something was once done to deserve them, however remote may be the time at which the doer lived. It may also be assumed that people having anything to be proud of would be very careful in the choice of mates; consequently, a title is not an altogether vain and empty thing, but—like some wines—age improves their flavour.

It was not unnatural that Wilfrid should treasure up the memory of Lady Katherine with more reverence than if she had been the daughter of a tripe-seller or of an old-clothes man. Sprung from such humble parents she might

have been as virtuous, as beautiful, as well-mannered, but the lack of a good ancestral brand would certainly have lessened her value, not only in the eyes of her own class, but even in the estimation of that paragon of virtue—the working man, who, by the bye, seldom gives himself this title, unless his normal condition happens to be "out of work." Wilfrid, thinking of himself as a monk in perpetuity, to whom carnal love would always be an impossibility, experienced for the lovely aristocrat none of that adolescent calf-love and spooniness so often indulged in by youths of his age, regarding her rather as a very devout Roman Catholic might cherish the remembrance of his patron saint.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ANGRY FATHER.

> There are the men who only scoff and laugh,
> When bid to reverence the Golden Calf.
> Others but think of what the world imposes,
> And disregard this special law of Moses.

THE fourteen days during which Mr Brinkhurst had given permission that Wilfrid should "have his fling" glided away in such a beautifully even manner that he hardly noticed their flight. Each day was exactly like its neighbour; in fact life at St. Joseph's seemed like one prolonged Sunday. Most men and

boys would have probably considered this resemblance decidedly undesirable. The irksomeness of being debarred for one whole day in seven from their usual pursuits is almost more than the ordinary run of mankind can bear; but to Wilfrid the calm, noiseless existence, free from the continual strivings and jostlings of the outer world, appeared the beau ideal of a state of being which he considered must always be more or less objectionable.

Brother Lawrence went away the day after the fight, finding a more congenial atmosphere in the medical studentship of Bartholomew's Hospital, London; so that when Wilfrid was not attending any of the sick poor, or exercising his muscles by digging in the garden, there was nothing to disturb the even flow of his meditations.

The fourteen days had come and gone, but having apprised his father of his unalterable decision, he considered that there could be no need of any further correspondence.

Of his mother and sister he sometimes thought with affectionate remembrance, and anticipation of the bright spring time, when they might perhaps pay him a visit; but the idea of ever returning to Fritham—except as a mere visitor—never entered his head.

Indoors, except when enlivened by a visit from Mr Sparman, there he sat in his lonely cell for hours together, almost without movement, either dreaming over the pages of some musty old father, or meditatively looking out over the peaceful landscape, feeling an inactive sort of pity for the poor hewers of wood and

drawers of waters whom he might chance to see toiling in the fields, at that time little thinking how much nearer an approach than himself they made to contentment and happiness.

Continual musings led him to regard everything in the abstract only—a sure method of inducing melancholy—for looked at in that way there is nothing in the universe which is not eminently unsatisfactory.

Two days after the expiration of the fortnight, Mr Brinkhurst wrote his son a rather angry letter, inquiring what on earth he meant by disobeying the strict injunction laid upon him.

Firmly, but respectfully, Wilfrid replied that his path in life was chosen, and that nothing would turn him aside from it.

Then Mr Brinkhurst wrote an indignant and peremptory letter to Mr Sparman, ordering him under pain of various unpleasant legal consequences, to bring the boy back to his home without a moment's delay. Mr Brinkhurst's wealth had for so long a time procured him implicit and unhesitating obedience, that he could not understand how the tone of a demand should be likely to affect its fulfilment. He was in fact a lamentable instance of a man spoilt by that severe ordeal which so few people successfully withstand—the rapid and comparatively easy acquisition of wealth.

Had he appealed to Mr Sparman from a paternal standpoint, putting it to him that the youth's prospects in life would —according to his family's ideas—be

completely blighted if he persisted in his present course, the young priest would have exerted his utmost influence to induce compliance with the father's wishes; there are, however, certain ways of addressing even the meekest of men, which will produce in them a feeling of the most dogged resistance; unfortunately, Mr Brinkhurst adopted one of those ways, and in reply he received a letter from Mr Sparman written in the coldest, briefest possible language, stating that he had placed before Brother Francis, known in the world as Wilfrid Brinkhurst, the letter containing his father's wishes, which seemed unlikely to produce the desired effect.

The next day but one, all the monks had just taken their seats in the refectory, and after having sung a very

elaborate grace, were about to commence their frugal meal of cabbage, potatoes, scrag of mutton, and pease-pudding, with the appetites likely to follow a scanty six o'clock breakfast, when a loud sharp ring was heard at the garden gate. Brother Eusebius—having just received his plateful of smoking food—was about to take up his black-handled knife and fork, but it happened to be his day for attending to the door; without even a wistful glance he rose from the form, and with downcast eyes, and hands accurately crossed on his midriff, he walked out of the room with the short step generally affected in cenobitic institutions.

In less time than might have been expected from the length of his stride, he returned with precisely the same

bearing, and gliding up to Mr Sparman's right hand, he announced—in a voice similar to that in which he would have commenced intoning "dearly beloved brethren"—"Mr. Brinkhurst."

That gentleman, however—being of a pushing nature, or being unwilling perhaps that anyone should be put to the trouble of announcing him—entered the room hurriedly, and walking up to the end of the table, he glared savagely at Mr Sparman, who waited for him to speak.

The rich stockjobber had just arrived tired and hungry from his long journey, and the smell of victuals—of which he was not likely to be invited to partake, unworthy as they were of such an accomplished gourmand—by no means tended to improve his quick imperious temper.

Quite unabashed by the strange society in which he found himself, regarding Mr Sparman with that intense look, between a scowl and a stare, which is so often the result of the constant, sustained outlook for those minute shades of variation in prices constituting daily bread on the Stock-Exchange, Mr Brinkhurst said, in a rough, husky voice, "I've come to fetch away my son, so let him pack up and look sharp; never mind his dinner, he can dine with me."

"There sits your son," said Mr Sparman, with a wave of his hand in Wilfrid's direction.

Mr Brinkhurst's eyes followed Mr Sparman's hand till they rested on Wilfrid, whom he had not before recognised. "Well I'm ——," he said, looking at his son in horror-struck as-

tonishment, "a pretty guy you've let them make of you, with your head shaved like the friar in 'Romeo and Juliet?'"

"Father!" said Wilfrid in a hushed manner, looking up for a moment, "remember where you are."

"Remember where I am, you young monkey!" blurted out Mr Brinkhurst angrily, "why, it's enough to make a man strike his grandmother! Look at you; there's a pretty figure for me to take back to Fritham!"

"Hush! father," said Wilfrid, looking up again, "don't you see that all here are the same as I am?"

"Same as you are!" repeated Mr Brinkhurst with supreme contempt, "a lovely set of half-shaved poodles to walk about with! Who do you think's going

to buy you five-guinea wigs because you choose to let a parcel of fellows make a fool of you, I should like to know!"

Mr Sparman, feeling himself reflected on, here interposed with some severity: "Mr Brinkhurst, I think your remarks are unjust and uncalled-for."

"Well, that's what it comes to," resumed Mr Brinkhurst, with rather less roughness; "why it would be all over 'the House' in an hour or two, and they'd be lifting his hat up every half minute to look at his bald head."

"Don't let that annoy you, father," said Wilfrid, with downcast eyes, "I'm never likely to trouble the Stock-Exchange by my presence."

"Pooh, pooh! rubbish! there, get some decent clothes on your back, and come along—never mind about your

dinner, I'll give you a better one at the hotel. I've kept the fly waiting."

"Still looking down, Wilfrid said very softly, "I'm sorry you should have come all this way, but I can't go back with you."

"Not go back!" exclaimed Mr Brinkhurst angrily, "what the deuce do you mean? I should have thought you would have got tired of this tomfoolery in a fortnight."

"I'm sorry to displease you, but I shall never quit here," said Wilfrid, quietly but firmly.

"Bah! nonsense, boy! you're not old enough to know your own mind—in fact, you're hardly old enough to have a mind—what I call a mind you know. Perhaps, Mr Sparman, you'll tell him that it's his duty to obey his father."

Very stifly Mr Sparman replied, "I've already spoken to him on the subject, and he has elected to stop here. I've no wish to prevent him conforming to your wishes."

"Why don't you turn him out, then? —a parcel of nonsense!" returned Mr Brinkhurst, indignantly.

"Because I don't consider it right to do so."

"Oh, no! of course not!" said Mr Brinkhurst, getting very red in the face, "of course not! This is a nice how-d'ye-do! It's your influence that keeps him here, I don't want any ghost to tell me that much; it's the old Roman-Catholic trick, 'You can go if you like, don't say I stopped you—oh, no; but, mind, if you do go you'll be damned.' I know the game—it's as old as the hills." Perhaps

Mr Brinkhurst alluded to the seven hills on which the Eternal City is built, for he waved his hand in that direction.

"I'll not suffer such language," said Mr Sparman, rising and drawing himself up to his full height; "your son is at perfect liberty to go or to stay. Had you behaved differently, I should no doubt have used my 'influence' to second your wishes."

"Ah! I thought so," rejoined Mr. Brinkhurst, jerking his head forward as though he intended to project it and his words down his opponent's throat, "you own you have influence then, and you refuse to use it?"

"You may draw what inference you choose," replied Mr Sparman, loftily.

"Inference be ——!" said Mr Brinkhurst scornfully, and turning round im-

patiently as if to go out. "And you refuse to come with me, eh, young shaver?" he added, wheeling suddenly round and looking at his son.

"I feel it right to do so," replied Wilfrid, in a low tone

"Very well, very well! Look here, Mr Sparman, I'll see if the law won't assist me. Take away a man's child in this —— sneaking sort of way! you shall hear from my solicitor, sir—pretty sharp too, I can tell you," and with a final menacing wave of his hand and shake of his head, the angry stock-jobber hurried out.

For some few moments there was a dead silence; all the monks had been amused spectators of what, as schoolboys, they would have called "the row," and what they still thought of as such,

but none of them had the face to laugh, or to in any way evince enjoyment of the scene.

A few tear-drops fell from Wilfrid's eyes as he pushed aside his untasted dinner, and said in a constrained manner to Mr Sparman, "I hope you won't think the worse of me for having been the cause of so much annoyance."

"Don't worry yourself, brother," replied Mr Sparman. "Your father's rather rough tongued, but hard words break no bones. I'm not sure, mind you, that you ought not to have gone with him—of course he could make you if he choose, as you're under age."

"I felt I couldn't go," said Wilfrid, passionately, as he hid his face in one hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

HABEAS CORPUS.

Most of those who have deservedly, or undeservedly, attained success in the acquisition of money, look upon the less fortunate as creatures deficient in energy and capacity; this conclusion is sometimes right, the error of the successful man lies in his over-estimate of himself, and his omission to give any credit to the fortunate combinations of circumstances, which are, for the sake of convenience called, *luck*.

Mr. BRINKHURST went away from St. Joseph's furious, the bare remembrance of having been bearded by a beggarly priest, before a parcel of boys playing at being monks, made him stamp his

foot on the floor of the fly so violently that the old horse—mistaking it for the action of his driver on the foot-board, which the sagacious quadruped had learnt to understand as a signal for extraordinary speed—started off downhill at something between a canter and a gallop, on his three most useful legs, suffering in consequence somewhat severely from bit pressure before he could stop himself.

The Stock-jobber's anger, however, did not cause him to forget the dinner he had ordered at the best hotel in Burchester, although it no doubt had something to do with his swearing at the meats, and cursing the wines as unfit to be placed before a sweep; but he omitted to disclose his occupation, so the waiter was unable to estimate the

liquors' exact amount of inappropriateness.

On the following morning Mr. Brinkhurst, instead of riding to town by his regular omnibus — which would have landed him in Gracechurch Street at a quarter before eleven o'clock—went by one an hour earlier. On alighting from it he took a cab for Mr Tubby's office.

Mr Tubby always arrived there at ten punctually, so that Mr Brinkhurst caught him almost before he had read his letters. Mr. Brinkhurst walked into the outer office, and asked to see the solicitor, with an air which said as plainly as words "There's nothing like waiting about me," so the clerk at once ushered him into the private room without even first taking in to his master

the usual small slip of paper bearing the client's name.

Mr. Tubby, as usual during the commencement of a consultation toyed with a red-tape-bound bundle of papers. "And what can I have the pleasure of doing for Mr Brinkhurst ?" he asked in his blandest manner.

"Well, you can do a good deal, and I want it done pretty sharp too," replied Mr Brinkhurst, nodding his head several times at his adviser.

Mr Tubby smiled confidently as though he would say "Then I'm your man."

"You know that Sparman fellow?" opened Mr. Brinkhurst.

Mr Tubby opined that he did know him, having had the pleasure of flooring him on the elevation of the elements.

"Yes, yes, of course you did! well, that fool of a boy of mine, ran away to his monastery-place, down near Burchester. You knew he had a monastery-place down there?"

Mr Tubby signified assent by an affable droop of his eyelids.

"Well, I didn't trouble much about it, but I wrote and told him he might stop there a fortnight and then come back. Well, d'ye think he came back? not he. Well, yesterday I went down to fetch him up. D'ye think he'd come up? Not a chance."

"Very annoying!" sympathised Mr Tubby.

"Yes, well, I just gave Mr Sparman a bit of my mind. I let him have it pretty warm, I can tell you. Of course, it's his influence keeps the boy there."

"Of course," assented Mr Tubby.

"Well, the question is what are you going to do?"

"It's an extremely simple case. You settle, say, fifty or a hundred pounds on the boy, and make him a ward of the Court of Chancery; then you apply for the Court to make an order on Mr Sparman to produce the boy, and then ——"

"No, I don't. Not if I know it. You don't put me in Chancery. I always have kept my head out of Chancery, and I mean to do so still. Why, I've heard of people being thrown into Chancery and never coming out again, oh! no, not for Brinkhurst!"

"I assure you, my dear sir, you're labouring under an entire misconception. Chancery proceedings used to extend

over a long period, in the old times; but we've altered all that, and now you can knock them off just as quickly as you can common-law cases."

"Now, look here, Tubby, it won't do; you don't get me in Chancery, I tell you. Haven't you got anything better than that? Can't you do anything under the Habeas-Corpus Act, or is that only for criminals?"

"Oh, certainly, my dear sir, if you prefer it; it's very simple. Apply to the Court of Queen's Bench for a writ of *habeas corpus*."

"That's the sort; a writ to have his carcase,—there's something plain and straightforward about that."

"Oh, yes! we can do it that way if you like; for my own part I should have preferred the other way."

"I dare say you would; but then, you see, you're not going to pay for it. Well, that's settled, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Mr Tubby, musingly. "I'll take counsel's opinion if you like, but——"

Having interrupted the solicitor by anathematising counsel, Mr Brinkhurst continued:

"What the deuce can you want with counsel; here you've got a case as plain as a pikestaff, and yet you want to take 'counsel's opinion.' Always the way with you solicitors; in the first place, because it takes some of the responsibility off your shoulders; and, in the second place, because you enjoy exercising the patronage. 'Live and let live,' is your motto, particularly if

you can 'let live' at somebody else's expense."

"I can assure you, my dear sir," said Mr Tubby, who during his client's last speech had appeared to be occupied in running his eyes and his fingers through a favourite bundle of papers, "I can assure you that in complicated cases we feel that we should fail in our duty to our clients if we did not take counsel's opinion."

"Yes, yes, in difficult cases; but even then the judge as often as not disagrees with 'counsel's opinion;' so you might just as well have lost your case without it. No, it won't wash you know; when I've made up my mind to go to law I go. Of course one's open to be convinced by one's solicitor; but I don't want another man to give me advice,

because I should be safe not to take it, unless he happened to agree with me. It's just the same with the doctors—they always want 'another opinion,' and the patients are fools enough to pay for it."

"But I think that you'll see that our case is not quite the same as the doctors," said Mr Tubby, smiling deprecatingly, "our interests might insensibly influence our judgment in advising a client to fight, whereas a counsel who has nothing to do with a case beyond giving his opinion, is sure to give a disinterested one."

"Well, there's something in that, as the monkey said. However, notwithstanding, nevertheless, you don't want counsel's opinion in this instance. How soon will you be able to serve the writ?"

"Ah! I see you're under the impression that it's like serving an ordinary eight-day writ," said Mr Tubby, smiling tolerantly. "I shall first have to instruct counsel to apply for the writ, then a day has to be fixed for the hearing, and the other side can show cause against, if they feel inclined. If they don't appear you're sure to get your writ granted, and then Mr Sparman will be ordered to produce the boy."

"Well, that's a pretty game, isn't it?" asked Mr Brinkhurst, nodding his head contemptuously, "almost as long-winded as if I wanted to prove my identity after a twenty years' absence."

"You'd much better apply to the Court of Chancery," suggested Mr Tubby, with the air of a man who knows that

he is giving the best advice, "it's the more usual course."

"Now, what's the good, Tubby?" said Mr Brinkhurst, testily, "I won't put myself in Chancery to please you nor anyone else."

"Very well," said Mr Tubby, shrugging his shoulders, "we can do it the other way."

"Of course you can; how long will it take?"

"It's impossible for me to say. You see it's not like a thing that's done every day; in fact, it's a very rare form of procedure. However, you may rely on my getting it done as quickly as possible. I'll instruct counsel this very day."

"That's right, rattle 'em up sharp, don't give 'em any breathing-time. Good bye."

The stock-jobber shook hands with Mr Tubby, and rushed off to play his double *rôle* of "bull" and "bear" for the remainder of the day.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FILBERT AVENUE.

> Whene'er you see a man at dinner seat himself,
> He has a tendency to over-eat himself.

To Wilfrid the days rolled on almost as smoothly and unnoticeably as the earth itself. When not occupied in visiting the poor, he read one of the few books he had brought with him—Shakespeare, Hudibras, Goethe, Thomas à Kempis—or wrote essays on the purpose and destiny of man—groping after that grand impossibility, truth.

It was only on Sundays, when Lady Katherine attended service at the little chapel of the monastery, that his pulse beat more rapidly, and his blood was pumped through his veins to rather quicker time. From his seat in the toy chancel he glanced occasionally at her beautiful, rapt face, feeling as though she were part and parcel of the pure *cultus* in which he was taking part, undisturbed by the faintest sense of sin which such a nature as his would have surely experienced had he regarded her with anything like the ordinary boyish spooniness.

The day after Mr Brinkhurst's interview with Mr Tubby was the 2nd of November, the first day of Michaelmas term, and Lady Katherine's seventeenth birthday. When only ten years old she

specially desired that the day might be celebrated by a dinner and entertainment to the poor and aged, living on and near her father's estate. The custom had been religiously kept up. In this festival, and in bestowing gifts at Christmas, the Earl took a certain amount of mild pleasure. Reported in all the local, and in many of the London newspapers, it obtained for him just that slight flavour of philanthropy to which he did not object, without earning for him any such soubriquets as "the goody Earl," or the "poor person's peer." He professed to be perfectly insensible to public criticism, the real fact was, that being particularly thin-skinned he took especial care never to do anything which should expose him to it; so that his earnest endeavours to lead a

blameless life caused him to do very little that was praiseworthy. Men of this class, both nobles and commoners, have existed plentifully in all ages, holding as a prime article of faith that their first duty is to themselves; wherein lies their second duty they do not go on to inquire, and in this by some people they are held to err.

Dinner for two hundred was served in the barn, on a farm about half a mile from the Earl's seat; the guests were to be at liberty to roam about the park and grounds, to feed the deer or to play games, with a view to at least a partial digestion of the large extra amount of food which they would be sure to consume, both because of the quality being better than they were accustomed to, and because of its being

provided at someone else's expense. The monks from St Joseph's were invited, in order that they might be useful in performing such usual priestly functions as serving out the victuals, leading the hymns, saying grace, &c., and it was noticeable that several old gentlemen in the company, staunch Conservatives in the matter of religion—who had often been heard to express strong disapproval of "they Catholic chaps" in allusion to Mr Sparman's band—before dinner was over gave it as their opinion that the young priest was "not such a bad sort, after all said and done."

The weather, which had been rainy till towards the end of October, was now all that could be desired even for an open air *fête;* the turf was dry, the air was warm and balmy. Although the sun

shone brilliantly, its summer scorching power had considerably toned down, so that it was delightful to bask in. The trees retained nearly all their beautifully tinted leaves by the kind permission of Boreas and Jupiter Pluvius, who by steady co-operation for eight or ten hours, could have certainly brought most of them to their mother earth, dirty, draggle-tailed masses of decaying vegetation, in place of the brightly-coloured living things they now appeared.

Having eaten as much as they could, the guests strolled about the park and grounds in twos and threes, amusing themselves in various ways. Lady Katherine was here, there, and everywhere, with a kind word for everybody. Wilfrid's definite occupation being over,

he sauntered away alone, and was soon out of earshot of the buzzing, laughing crowd.

His eyes fixed on the ground, hardly noticing where he went, he presently found himself in a winding avenue of filbert trees meeting overhead; here and there the sun shone through the leafy screen, causing such fine effects of light and shade as artists delight in. Wilfrid could hardly fail to experience a dim sense of pleasure in all this warmth and beauty, but he was too much given to abstract thinking to lapse into that nearly satisfied feeling of dreamy pleasure which a comfortable amount of sun produces in many temperaments. It seemed rather humiliating to feel greatly exhilarated merely because the rays of the earth's lighting and heating

apparatus happened to be unintercepted by clouds. At such times he thought of the universe merely as a collection of bits of matter that become cool, lighted by other bits that had not cooled; when they should all have cooled it occurred to him that the outlook to most people would be rather dreary. His gloomy meditations were disturbed by the rustling of a silk dress, and on rounding an abrupt curve in the avenue, Lady Katherine appeared to him like a vision from heaven, radiant in her saintlike beauty, but with more colour in her face than usual, produced by extra exertion.

"Oh, I think you're called Brother Francis?" she said, without the least shyness or hesitation; "I've been looking for you everywhere."

Wilfrid was so slow in finding words, that Lady Katherine continued:

"I think you've been visiting a poor old *protegée* of mine over at East Varring, who's just lost her husband and son by small-pox, and now lies ill with it herself. I haven't been able to go so far the last day or two; do you think she'll recover?"

"It really seems doubtful," replied Wilfrid, finding no difficulty in replying to a direct question, "neither she, nor her husband, nor her son were ever vaccinated."

"Oh, that's very foolish!" said Lady Katherine, shaking her head gravely.

"Yes, I'm afraid it makes her chance more slender," said Wilfrid, "but if a person once takes a prejudice against vaccination, it seems quite impossible to

overcome it. This old lady told me that sooner than have any of her children vaccinated, she'd see them killed before her eyes, because she didn't know what poison the doctor might put in their blood."

"Yes; I've heard that about thirty years ago a child died of some disease, which was proved to have been caused by vaccination, and ever since then nearly all the natives of East Varring prefer to run their risk. So you think poor Mrs Grimmidge won't recover?"

"She may," replied Wilfrid, looking down; "the doctor hasn't given her up. But can one really wish her to do so? She's lost everyone that was dear to her. Her two other sons were lost last winter in a gale off the west coast of Ireland."

"Poor, dear old soul! How very sad! and yet everyone clings to life. It's an instinct implanted in us for a wise purpose."

Wilfrid remained silent. He did not say "Yes, I suppose so," as most people would have done; because, never having thought out the question, he consequently might have to alter his decision. He was quite unprepared to say whether the instinct could be said to be implanted in man, or whether it might not rather be attributable to his weakness and earthiness.

"Do you think of remaining at St. Joseph's?" asked Lady Katherine, by way of continuing the conversation.

"Yes, replied Wilfrid, rather hesitatingly, "that's my present intention."

"Ah! how I envy you," said Lady

Katherine, with a sigh, "to enter a convent used to be my most earnest wish; but my parents wouldn't hear of it, and I couldn't bear the thought of of grieving them by disobedience, especially as I thought I could do as much good by remaining in the world."

Wilfrid winced at these words, and he asked himself whether in place of having done the thing that was absolutely right, his conduct had not been rather selfish. At this moment the Earl, smoking a very fragrant cigar, came towards them.

"Oh, papa!" said Lady Katherine going up to him and fingering his watch-chain while she spoke, "you'll be so pleased to hear that poor old Mrs Grimmidge may recover, after all."

"I'm sure I'm very pleased to hear

it," said the Earl puffing a thin stream of smoke heavenwards, and shutting his eyes in a way that a bystander might either take to express supreme indifference to the old woman's fate, or a silent prayer for her recovery. Lady Katherine judging everyone by her own pure standard, believed that it meant the latter.

Turning to Wilfrid, he said affably, but in a manner which denoted that he was not to be deceived by the young monk's old look, "Well, and how do you employ your time up at St. Joseph's?"

"I read and write, sir, when I'm not visiting the poor," replied Wilfrid, playing with his girdle.

"Read, yes, and what do you read?" asked the Earl, holding out his cigar, and looking admiringly at its ash, as

though it had been a beautiful work of art.

"I've only a few books with me," replied Wilfrid,—Shakespeare, Hudibras, Goethe ——"

"Good! very good!" interrupted the Earl, you couldn't read anything better. Hudibras I swear by, no man ever has or ever will compress so much wit into so small a compass; but to thoroughly enjoy all its political points you must have Conservatism born and bred in you."

"No one can enjoy them more than I do," said Wilfrid, with animation, "I have the most thorough contempt for Cromwell and his faction. Charles might have been faulty, but when a handful of men, presuming on their energy, take upon themselves to suddenly overturn the existing order of government and set

up something of their own in its place, they ought to be treated like the vermin they are."

"Very good indeed!" said the Earl, laughing excitedly. "I shouldn't have expected to find such decided opinions in one so young. I presume you belong to some good old Tory family."

"My father cares nothing whatever about politics; but I've heard that my grandfather, Brinkhurst, used to interest himself greatly in the return of the right candidate."

"What, the Lancashire Brinkhursts?" asked the Earl.

"Yes, that's my father's county," replied Wilfrid; "and my mother's family, the Gouldings of Devizes, were all staunch Conservatives."

"Gouldings? Gouldings?" muttered the Earl: "didn't they afterwards go to live at Wilton?"

"Yes, that was where my mother married from," said Wilfrid, beginning to feel quite at his ease.

"I thought so," continued the Earl. "I've heard my friend the Marquis of Bowlton mention the name. I'm glad you come of so good a stock. I shall be pleased to see you any morning when you like to walk over; you may perhaps find something worth looking at in my library."

The Earl raised his hat, Lady Katherine took his arm, making a slight bow, and the two walked away towards the house, leaving Wilfrid with the image of the fair saintlike girl inefaceably engraved on his memory.

CHAPTER XVI.

JUDGMENT.

The best of men have sometimes been held up as the worst of characters.

Mr Tubby was as good as his word; Mr Brinkhurst's instructions as to "rattling it into 'em sharp," were implicitly obeyed, insomuch that on the fifth of November—that memorable day on which many a London rough testifies his attachment to the glorious Protestant religion—counsel, having been duly instructed by Mr Tubby, applied for a writ entitling him to have the body of Wilfrid Brinkhurst, at that time im-

properly detained at the monastery or seminary of St. Joseph, at Clumpton Abbots, by the undue influence of the Reverend Richard Sparman, a priest in holy orders, who—if he could—was to show cause why he should not be ordered to produce the body of the said Wilfrid Brinkhurst on the tenth of November. The learned Lord Chief-Justice and his two brother judges rather inclined to name the ninth of November, but some one pointed out that the Lord Mayor would on that day probably feel himself bound to amuse the people by some sort of show, though, whether it was expected that the Rev Mr Sparman, or Wilfrid Brinkhurst, or the learned counsel, would desire to see the show, seemed quite uncertain. In the event, it might have been just as well fixed for the

ninth. No one showed cause or ever had the slightest intention of doing so.

Mr Sparman received the notice and read it carefully; but as it merely fixed a day on which he could have an opportunity of showing cause why he should not be ordered to produce the boy, he took no action in the matter, knowing that there was no cause why he should not produce him, and having no wish to detain him, either against his father's will or against his own.

Consequently, on the tenth of November, Mr Sparman, not having shown cause, an order was made that he should, under fear of horrible penalties, produce the body of Wilfrid Brinkhurst, on the thirteenth of November. This was quick work, but when the law does get a chance of being short, sharp, and

decisive, it seldom loses an opportunity of improving the occasion.

Wilfrid knew nothing about the rule to show cause. Mr. Sparman's innate delicacy prevented him from mentioning it; he thought it would be something like saying, "Look, what a mess I'm in on your account! Why didn't you go away with your father?" When, however, there arrived the positive and peremptory order for Wilfrid's appearance at a certain time on a certain day silence became impossible.

That his father should have taken such proceedings, seemed to Wilfrid the height of bad taste, and he felt the annoyance which he knew they must cause his friend and mentor much more than the certainty of being withdrawn from the only life he cared to live.

To obey the order, they were obliged to come to town the day before. They slept at a modest hotel in Aldersgate Street, and arrived at Westminster at least a quarter of an hour before the assembling of the Court, to be stared at by everybody. The usher declared that if he was asked once he was asked twenty times "who those Roman Catholic gents were?" and to each of these inquirers he had in effect replied, that "the tall gent had been ordered by their lordships, to bring up the young'un out of a convent, or a monastery, or something of that sort."

The three judges, clad in silk and ermine, rustled into their seats, looking praternaturally wise and venerable. There was a general hush and removal of hats. Mr Sparman, who had been in a Court

before, removed his instinctively, but Wilfrid, deep in thoughtful observation of the scene, was obliged to be twice severely nudged by the usher, before he understood what was required of him. When the two friends standing at that side of the Court which faces the jury-box, disclosed their shaven crowns, all eyes were turned in that direction, even the judges could not restrain a glance, while appearing to carefully peruse the papers before them.

A learned counsel, seeing the Bench ready to hear him, then stood up and with a rich, thick utterance suggestive of little dinners and port wine, politely argued with the judges a point reserved; each one in turn affably cracked some legal nut with him, cases were quoted, vellum-bound books were handed up to

their lordships, who frequently whispered to each other, and finally decided against him. That being disposed of, another learned gentleman moved for something which he did not get—viz., a rule for a new trial—the judges considering that the case had been very properly left to the jury, who had given a verdict which they of course believed to be right. Another jury might very likely come to the same conclusion, consequently to grant the learned gentleman's client a new trial would be a cruel kindness. He had better put up with the first loss, pay, and look pleasant. His advocate would, no doubt, have felt happier had he carried his point, but he bore the decision, "Rule refused," with praiseworthy equanimity.

Having noted on the paper which he

held in his hand the extreme punctuality of attendance required of him, Mr Sparman had fully made up his mind to be disposed of as soon as the Court assembled, his nerves were strung to undergo a certain unpleasant ordeal at a certain time; but an hour or more passed away without his being called upon, and he began to feel limp and nervous, his hands grew clammy, his throat became so parched that he feared he should be unable to utter the few words he had resolved on saying with proper effect.

At half-past eleven, a learned Q.C. rose and began talking by the yard; with each judge in turn he exchanged courtly jests, which they seemed to enjoy. Juniors tittered and looked forward to the time when they should be able to do likewise.

At half-past twelve o'clock, the learned Q.C., having finished, fluttered out of Court with many hitchings up of his refractory silk gown on to his shoulder, and another gentleman rather sheep-faced, beautifully wigged and shaved, stood up and informed their lordships that he appeared for the father in the *habeas-corpus* case.

"Does anyone appear for the defendant?" asked the centre judge.

"I believe not m'Lud," replied the learned gentleman, taking a rapid survey of the several counsel sitting behind him, althongh he had long since ascertained that none of them held a brief in the case.

"Is the defendant in Court?" asked his Lordship.

Mr. Sparman answered for himself in

such a low tone that the usher nudged him in the back and told him to speak up.

"Do you produce the boy?" asked his Lordship.

Mr Sparman, denoting Wilfrid with a wave of his hand, replied, "I do, my Lord," in a rather louder voice, as he felt sensible that the heavy-handed usher still stood behind him.

The learned counsel then made a short and quite unnecessary speech.

He sat down, and the Lord Chief-Justice politely asked, "And what have you to say to this, Mr Sparman?"

"Merely this, my Lord," replied the young priest: "Wilfrid Brinkhurst came to me of his own free will when I least expected him. I am guiltless of having, in the slightest degree, influenced him to stay—in fact, I endeavoured to per-

suade him to return home. When his father came to Clumpton Abbots, he used very rough and insulting language to me, and I forbore to interfere in any way. Had his conduct been different, I should have, no doubt, endeavoured to influence the son to comply with his father's wishes. As soon as the Court orders me to produce the boy, I produce him without the least hesitation, and——"

"It would have been a very serious matter had you not done so," interrupted the Lord Chief-Justice.

"Exactly, my Lord," continued Mr Sparman, rather abashed, "but under the circumstances I could hardly be expected to produce him without being ordered to do so. He was always at perfect liberty to go or to stay, and there was no reason why he should not

have gone voluntarily with his father, neither was there any reason why his father should not have compelled him to go. I trust that your Lordships will consider that I have not been at all to blame in the matter—that is all I have to say."

Their Lordships leaning half out of their chairs, whispered from one to the other for about two minutes, and then the Lord Chief-Justice delivered judgment to the effect that the Court was unanimously of opinion that the boy had stayed at Clumpton Abbots owing to the influence of the defendant, who must be ordered to give him up, and further to pay all the costs.

Mr Sparman bowed his head meekly. This was the second time he had tasted the laws of his country, and their flavour did not improve on acquaintance.

The Court rose, and adjourned for luncheon. Mr Sparman took his young friend's hand, gave it an affectionate grip, and went out without speaking. Wilfrid stood motionless, looking after him till the swing-doors hid him from view, and and then, hearing his own name called, he turned and saw his father sitting, beside Mr Tubby, on one of the front seats.

"What, won't you speak to your own father, Willie?" said Mr Brinkhurst, with effusion, elated by his success.

Wilfrid shook hands with his father in silence.

"A silly piece of business this, altogether," continued the stock-jobber. "Sparman looked very down in the mouth. He's not half a bad fellow, though. I'd have willingly offered to

pay the costs, only I know he'd feel insulted. It's a pity he's so——There you know the man, Tubby, what do you think of him?"

"Oh! I think he's a highly conscientious man," replied the solicitor, gathering up his papers preparatory to moving, "a little——"

"Yes, a little wrong-headed, perhaps," suggested Mr Brinkhurst, tolerantly, "but a devilish good fellow at bottom, I really believe; it's a pity he has such peculiar notions; but there, he's young; plenty of time for him to get rid of his strange fancies. He ought to fall head-over-heels in love with some deuced fine woman; she'd soon knock the monkish ideas out of him.

Mr Tubby assented, and they all three left the Court.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUBMISSION.

A pathway not remarkable for beauty
We still should take whene'er it is our duty.

So Mr Brinkhurst had his son delivered up to him like a package of goods, and took him home in a cab to Fritham. His mother kissed him and cried over him; but no sooner had he taken his hat off than his sister Helen burst out laughing.

"Oh, Wilfrid!" she said, quite unable to restrain her merriment; "what a figure they've made you!"

"That's just what I said," assented Mr Brinkhurst, seating himself.

"Were you all cut like that?" asked Helen, still laughing.

"Yes," said Wilfrid, without looking up.

"What a pity!" said Helen, "he had such a beautiful head of hair."

"Well, my dear boy, I suppose it's all for the best," said Mrs Brinkhurst, tearfully; "you see your father couldn't bear the idea of your being a monk, and I expect you would have grown tired of it sooner or later; besides you can do your duty in life whether you're in a monastery or on the Stock-Exchange."

Still silent, Wilfrid seated himself on a chair near the table, and rested his head on his hand. Although quite un-

reconciled to the walk in life for which his father intended him, he seemed to have recognised the impossibility of following the path for which he fancied nature and his own predilections had especially fitted him. As an Englishman he was naturally law-abiding. The majesty of the law, as witnessed in the Court of Queen's Bench, had a very wholesome and beneficial effect upon him. It seemed almost as useless and wicked that anyone should ever dream of withstanding its authority as it would be to defy the law of heaven. The Lord Chief-Justice had decreed and he must obey, however distasteful obedience might be.

"Don't look so glum, boy," said Mr Brinkhurst, cheerily, looking up from his weekly financial paper, "you'll like it

well enough when you've been there a week or two; plenty of fun going forward when there isn't much business doing. Don't fancy that I mind standing you a wig; you shall have the best that can be got for money. You'd better have your head shaved all over, and no one will be any the wiser. You can always wear your hat in 'the House.'"

Gradually Wilfrid got acclimatised to the pleasant shade of Hercules Passage and Capel Court. The daily diet of fractions, at first so distasteful, at length came to be looked upon—if not exactly as a delicious treat—at least as tolerably wholesome food. The adaptability of man and some other animals to the circumstances in which they are placed has often been the subject of remark; and as his father had predicted, by the

end of the year the ex-monk had developed into a precocious sharp jobber; he even so far degenerated as to take a certain amount of interest in the business, and made some few friendships with youths of his own age; but he never ceased to regard it merely as an intermediate stage in the journey of life, a something to be borne with, not passively as the butterfly bears with his chrysalis case till the sun cracks it, but patiently till his own exertions should free him from the sordid trammels of commerce, and clothe him in a blaze of fame.

Viewed from a distance of twelve months, his life at Clumpton Abbots looked childish and contemptible, redeemed only from being considered an utter waste, by one bright particular

remembrance—the Lady Katherine. His vague aspirations after an almost Monk-of-Mount-Athos-like existence of exertionless contemplation, had given place to a hungry craving after distinction; and looking out into the dim future, literature seemed the only possible means of gratifying his ambition. Had he desired to outstrip his fellows merely as to tangible possessions and magnificence, his present occupation offered an almost boundless field for their acquisition. By making the scientific pursuit of wealth his be-all and end-all, he might ultimately become a Rothschild, and hold somewhat the same position to the rest of the world as a little boy he used to know at Fritham had held towards the rest of his fellows at school, when he won all their marbles at a

game of chance called "birds in the hand."

At a comparatively early age he used to experience a mild feeling of contempt for all that plate and upholstery of life which seemed to be the grand end aimed at by his father and by his father's friends.

At first he thought of cultivating his undoubted taste for drawing; but on reflection, he managed to convince himself that greatness as an artist was as inferior to fame as an author as house-painting is to Rafaelle's cartoons. After all, it was a mere trick of the eye and hand, with which the mind has comparatively little to do. Granting writing to be a mere trick of the brain, still it must be held entitled to the higher position.

Nearly all his spare time he devoted

to writing essays and reviews on passing and past events and what not. Some of them he ventured to send to leading periodicals, enclosing stamps for their return in case they should be rejected, as they always were, causing their author intense disappointment and depression. It was not till some time afterwards that he came to understand how largely the supply of amateur literature exceeds the demand, that even supposing some of his articles to be not inferior to those of the regular contributors, still the editor's first duty would be to his staff.

Few, however, who have once thoroughly made up their minds that a hearing in print is the one thing necessary to their happiness, have been rebuffed into relinquishing their loved

work, and Wilfrid plodded on steadily, gaining at least style and facility in expressing his ideas; ever goaded on by the vision of the one bright star of his existence — Lady Katherine. Not that he had the faintest idea of knowing her more intimately, but merely possessed by that feeling of devotion for some unattainable woman, which has stimulated hundreds of youths and men to deeds of heroism or folly. This ever-present sentiment doubtless caused him to be more easily reconciled to his new life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR SMITH.

A good judge of character will know even the accomplished commercial Jeremy Diddler for what he is at their first interview.

One afternoon, about this time, Mr Brinkhurst returned from the City, and went into his gorgeous drawing-room, in even better spirits than usual.

Mrs Brinkhurst reclined on a luxurious ottoman in the centre of the room, doing nothing, and thinking about as much. Helen, tatting, sat upright in a

delicate cane chair, which would have hardly sustained the weight of her overfed father.

"Who do you think called on me today?" he asked his wife as he subsided suddenly and heavily into a substantial arm-chair, with a sighing grunt, somewhat similar to that indulged in by paviors when using the rammer.

"I haven't the least idea replied his wife, languidly.

"Mr Smith," said her husband, resting an elbow on each arm of the chair, and clapping the tips of his fingers together.

"What, George Smith?" asked Mrs Brinkhurst, contriving to exhibit a faint amount of interest.

"No, David Smith."

"David Smith! I don't remember

him," said Mrs Brinkhurst dubiously, while she endeavoured to bring her mind into play.

"No, I don't suppose you do," said Mr Brinkhurst, chuckling at his keen sense of humour, "for I never saw him, or heard of him, till to-day."

Mrs Brinkhurst raised her eyebrows, and dismissed her mind from further service.

"Well, you remember young Blunsum, who went to Buenos Ayres when his father failed?"

Mrs Brinkhurst remembered him without an effort, and drooped her eyelids in assent.

"Well," continued Mr Brinkhurst, "it seems that this David Smith,——By-the-bye, though, I didn't ask him what he was out there. This David Smith met

young Blunsum in Buenos Ayres, and happened to mention my name. Well, Smith made a lot of money over there —forgot to ask him how, by-the-bye— and to-day he calls on me in the City, puts down five hundred in notes, says he shall have four or five thousand in a day or two, and says he shall take it as a very great favour if I'll speculate for him, according as we may arrange each morning, charging him the usual commission."

"I thought that was broker's business, 'pa," said Helen, without looking up from her tatting.

That's just what I'm coming to, Miss Sharpshins, if you'll give me half a chance. Well, I told him he'd better employ a respectable broker; but he said he didn't know one, and if I would

oblige him he'd ever so much rather go in with me because he'd such faith in my luck; so at last I agreed. I took rather a fancy to the fellow. I shan't charge him any commission, but it'll answer my purpose very well in two or three ways. You've got a better chance of working the market when you've got a few extra thousands at your back. I'm going to bring him home to dinner to-morrow. Splendid chance for you, Helen; he's not more than forty, dark, not bad-looking."

"That's rather old; but how do you know he'll take a fancy to me?"

"We shall see," said Mr Brinkhurst, cheerily. "I'll show him up, at all events."

On the following day, Mr Brinkhurst produced his new acquaintance—a dark

man of about the middle height, fat for his age, and oily-looking, with a very black moustache, and blue cheeks, where his whiskers had been shaved; his black hair was beautifully greased and brushed, and the parting ran from his forehead to the nape of his neck without the slightest interruption, his tail-coat fitted him well, but it gave him somewhat the appearance of a tightly stuffed pin-cushion. His waistcoat opened considerably, showing a wide expanse of white shirt, decorated with diamond studs. His manners were as oily as his look, and he was fulsomely polite. Helen hated him at first sight, and even Mrs. Brinkhurst took the trouble to form an opinion to the effect that he was not a gentleman.

Having imbibed as much choice wine

as his tightly-fitting coat would conveniently hold, his host ushered him into the drawing-room. After tea, Mr Brinkhurst asked his daughter to sing; but although she always complied without much pressing, in this instance she flatly refused; she could not sing mechanically, and the presence of the visitor threw a damp over her spirits; so she played a sonata, the severest she could find. Mr Smith clapped his hands loudly and expressed himself delighted; and Mr Brinkhurst, as a mere matter of form, asked him if he would favour them with a song.

While Helen was playing, Mr Smith had been looking over a portfolio of music which lay on the table, and his eye had been attracted by a frontispiece representing a rakish-looking young man,

dressed in a bright crimson cut-awaycoat, and flourishing a cane in his hand. This song had been accidentally left at the house by a youth, who brought it with the intention of giving an improved rendering of it—his courage unfortunately failing him at the last minute.

Mr Smith replied to Mr Brinkhurst's request with as much diffidence as he could assume, that he would do his best to sing a song which he happened to have found, if Miss Brinkhurst would condescend to play the accompaniment.

"Oh, yes! let's have it by all means," said Mr Brinkhurst, "don't you remember, Helen, young Glessing brought it, and when he was asked to sing it he said he couldn't?"

Helen did remember, but she made no reply. Mr Smith placed the music

before her, and having turned round, so as to face his audience, he sang in a deep, rough, baritone, and in a most assured manner, some verses in praise of woman and the consumption of fermented liquors in general, and champagne in particular.

Mr Brinkhurst was delighted, and said so in his usual gruff, hearty way.

Helen was disgusted, but she did not say so; she thought the sentiment beastly, the melody childish, and the words insane enough to have been composed by an idiot. Sung by young Glessing she might have hardly noticed their meaning, but bellowed out by this gross, oily man, with all the gusto that he could throw into them, they offended her so much that she could hardly finish the accompaniment, and although Mr Smith was

most amorously polite to her all the evening, as soon as he took his leave she said in her most decided manner, "If ever that man comes here again, I shall stay in my room, the very sight of him makes me sick."

"Well, I don't call him so very bad-looking, now,—what do you say, Lizzie?" said Mr. Brinkhurst, turning to his wife.

"His features are pretty good," replied Mrs Brinkhurst, who if she did not always quite agree with her husband, generally managed to avoid contradicting him.

"Why, I thought you might perhaps take a fancy to him, Helen. He was evidently smitten with you; one could see that with half an eye."

Helen, arranging the music in her portfolio, made no reply, and Mr Brink-

hurst came to the conclusion that it would not be expedient again to invite Mr Smith to Fritham.

The two, however, saw each other very frequently in the City, once every day at least. Mr Smith made extremely good use of his friend's information, and when he happened to take a special fancy to the purchases or sales recommended to him, he operated largely, to a much greater extent indeed than could be justified by the comparatively small amount which he had hitherto laid down; but everything turned out luckily, insomuch that in a few weeks his five hundred had increased to four or five thousand, and might in as many days dwindle to just so much less than nothing if—as Mr Brinkhurst told him—he continued to speculate so wildly. Hav-

ing secured a fair amount, he was wise enough to act on good advice. He took a respectable office in Throgmorton Street, dealt in stocks and shares with exceeding care, and was not above buying anything which occupied a small space, such as diamond rings, pins, plate, and jewellery in general, seldom asking the sellers any questions.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAWN OF REASON.

> Things you once deemed supreme, delectable,
> You'd now resign to be respectable.

Mr SPARMAN made his way out of the Court and walked slowly towards Euston Square Railway Terminus, sorrowful and very heavy. To be beaten in an action at law is at all times trying and depressing, even where nothing but money is involved; but to have his character reflected on, to be in effect held up to public scorn as a kidnapper and detainer of youth, was almost more than

his sensitive nature could bear. It was small consolation to reflect that he was not the first man who had been misrepresented and misunderstood.

Without Wilfrid Brinkhurst, Clumpton Abbots seemed desolate; the other monks were to him merely as a pack of unsympathetic schoolboys to a high-souled schoolmaster. Their lack of earnestness jarred on him; most of them had joined from the mere love of being peculiar, so often found in very young men; and well knowing that they could leave at a minute's notice whenever the fit should seize them, they carried themselves in a dilletante manner very irritating to a fervent enthusiast. Often he felt inclined to disregard the canon, "once a priest always a priest," to throw up the monastery in which he once took such

pride, and join "the horny-handed sons of toil" in Australia, there to take his chance of plucking out of the earth a sudden fortune on which he might pass the rest of his life in ease and retirement. The idea was no sooner formed than abandoned; a priest must fall very low indeed before he will throw up his frock. He is about as little likely to do so, as a gentleman is to voluntarily turn coalheaver or slaughterman.

Once a week regularly Lady Katherine Trampleasure came to St Joseph's to confess, and these visits were about the only things to which the young priest now looked forward. Neither by word nor look did he ever evince any other feelings than those of a father confessor; and, in fact, at that time woman-loving, except in a spiritual sense, was an exercise

which he had positively forsworn; still there was a pleasure in meeting, if only for a few minutes, a being so bright and pure—one who he felt could sympathise with him in his life and in his work. Not unfrequently he was invited to meet a select party of guests at Stourton Wood, and he had a standing invitation to call there in the morning whenever he might happen to be unoccupied. He was one of the few men in the neighbourhood with whom the Earl cared to associate, the splendid bindings of whose library were of quite secondary importance to the young priest, who soon caused its owner to know more about the insides of the books than could have been thought possible to a man so thoroughly occupied. Sometimes Lady Katherine added one to the

party, and then Mr Sparman did not feel dissatisfied with his position; her bright presence seemed like sunlight in the room, illuminating his brain with all sorts of vague and impracticable plans of life. It was in the loneliness of his cold, cheerless cell, in the silent watches of the night or early morning, that he felt the aimlessness of his existence, and at such times he almost caught himself wishing that there would fall in the fine City living of St Sheeroph Without, in the gift of his influential uncle. The incumbent was an asthmatic old man of seventy-nine, holding other fat appointments, both lay and clerical, but not at all likely to resign the living till forced to do so by death. With the exception of reading a nineteen-minute sermon every Sunday during a few months of

the year, he did next to nothing for his large income; but such men seem almost immortal.

That Richard Sparman, a high priest among high priests, should find such an idea floating through his head, seemed absurd even to himself, but he was older and wiser than when he first jumped at the rule of the monastery. The question kept suggesting itself, "What is all this to lead to?" and echo replied, or might have replied, had he asked the question aloud in a favourable position—"Nowhere!" It could not lead to fame or honour, or even to notoriety, unless he elected again to provoke the action of the Habeas Corpus Act. It was useless to think of changing his profession, why should he not remain in it and make the best of it? To do this it

was absolutely necessary that he should become orthodox, throw up all that pretty suggestive symbolism, which a respectable minority of all classes consider the *sine quâ non* of religion, and which others persist in thinking a mere retrogression towards that which their ancestors took so much trouble to destroy.

Why should he not become orthodox? he asked himself. What had Ritualism done for him? What was there in it that he should undergo social martyrdom for it? After all, there was really a very small part of it which could claim the dignity of "a principle," the remainder could only take rank under the inferior head of "decorations." His present position had ceased even to give him pleasure; he had long since begun to feel as though he were playing at

school. The frequent daily services with which so much of the time was occupied almost began to breed that contempt which comes of too much familiarity. Should he ever attain his half-formed wish, his abandonment of Ritualism must, he well knew, follow as a matter of course; without taking into account the possible proclivities of the parishioners, Ritualism in St Sheeroph would be an almost impossible incongruity, possessing as it did all the worst features of the rococco churchwarden style, with high pews, heavy galleries, and pulpit, towering above them—all of the same dark wood. St Sheeroph was built by a pupil of the great Wren—most ugly City churches are, which were not built by the great architect himself.

Well did Mr Sparman remember the old church. He had preached there once during his stay at Fritham, and the service had depressed him beyond measure, the responses mumbled by a toothless, drink-soddened parish clerk, seconded by a sort of irregular dropping fire of indistinct voices from the congregation; the singing led by a host of leather-lunged charity-children, ranged in a gallery on each side of the organ; the priest conducted to his lofty perch in the pulpit, and the door of it shut after him by a red-faced, gold-laced beadle. It might be just possible to make room for a choir, by removing a pew or two, but St Sheeroph's round, unornamental archways and general ugliness could never be made to harmonise with the prettiness of Ritualism,

Nevertheless, after mature consideration, Mr Sparman came to the conclusion that he would accept the living should it be offered to him, and he wrote to his influential uncle—who was a member of the Cabinet and hand and glove with the Premier—to that effect. Rectors of St Sheeroph had been translated to bishoprics ; such might, perhaps, be his luck, and as a bishop what might he not do ? Perhaps marry an Earl's daughter.

So, from the high ground which he had once taken, he had lapsed into regarding his calling as surgeons or lawyers think of their professions, and he was inclined to look upon the change as the natural consequence of increased wisdom and experience.

Helen Brinkhurst he certainly had not

forgotten. Often in his lonely cell the image of her piquant, fascinating, magnetic beauty, floated through his recollection as something which he had admired and could soon have loved, had he at the time when he felt her influence considered himself at liberty to give way to it. Then, however, monastic life seemed the best, the holiest, and consequently the happiest life that a man could lead. Latterly it had gradually dawned upon him that his existence could be spent more pleasantly and more profitably by following his profession in the usual way. With this conversion there had naturally come a vague idea of a possible ordinary courtship and marriage, and at the same time he had been frequently thrown into the company of Lady Katherine

Trampleasure whom he admired and half hoped to possess, as he might have longed for some peerless marble statue. Then her rank heightened the desirability of alliance with her; for what man is proof against ambition? Hitherto he had made no sign, and might never do so; had he at that time enjoyed the society of the warm-blooded and intensely-attractive Helen Brinkhurst, who nourished a sort of unacknowledged liking for him that might have been easily fanned into love, he would soon have found himself drawn into some decisive course of action. It had of course never occurred to Lady Katherine that she would ever be called upon to exercise any special liking for the young priest, and she behaved to him in her usual impassive manner. The position

merely amounted to this. She was the first possible mate who came within his cognisance after he changed his views as to the lonely cenobitic method of vegetation, and the more he saw of her the more he liked her, and thought how serenely beautiful she would look at the head of a bishop's table, till he felt pangs of jealousy when he heard that the Earl would entertain male guests in the evening, or when there happened to be any staying in the house. And yet he could hardly be called fickle in allowing thoughts of a second woman to enter his head, while the image of the first ought to have been there still. He had never allowed himself to love Helen Brinkhurst, and as soon as he felt that it would not be altogether inexpedient or unpleasant to give himself

liberty to indulge in the universal passion, he came in contact with a lady young, beautiful, of high rank, and in a very short time he fancied he loved her, without a thought as to the applicability of the couplet:

> "If she be not kind to me,
> What care I how kind she be?"

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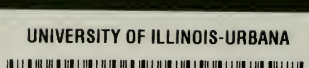

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